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THE MIRAGE OF LIFE.

THE

MIRAGE OF LIFE.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY TENNIEL,

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"Oh for a heart magnanimous to know
Thy worth, poor world, and let thee go."

JANE TAYLOR.

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THE MIRAGE.

THE MIRAGE OF LIFE.

THE MIRAGE.

To understand the natural object from which the title of this little volume is borrowed, let the reader imagine that, after travelling for hours across a trackless waste of burning sand, amidst the arid deserts of the East, he has, when tormented by thirst, made the discovery that his supply of water has failed. The last muddy drops are eagerly drained, but the sensation of pain is only aggravated by the effort. Meanwhile, the eyes, the mouth, the ears are gradually filled with the fine sand of the desert, until it is felt that a cup of cold water

from the spring would be cheaply purchased by its weight in gold. At this moment, when such is the traveller's tortured state of mind and body, he suddenly beholds an object which, to his surprise, has escaped his notice before. In the distance is seen a large lake; its banks are fringed with groves of verdant palm; its bosom studded with islets of refreshing green, while its water seems tenfold more inviting when contrasted with the burning solitudes around. Re-animated by the prospect, he presses forward, eager to quench his thirst. As he advances, a singular spectacle is witnessed, a strange phenomenon arises. The lake recedes as he approaches it. Again and again does he advance, but again and again does the object retire; until at length, exhausted with fatigue, tortured by thirst, and overpowered by excitement, he sinks in despair on the sand, discovering that all is deception, and that he has been chasing the Mirage of the desert.

This remarkable natural appearance is an

optical illusion, produced by the reflection of objects on the oblique rays of the sun refracted by the air, which is rarefied by the heat of the burning soil. It is apparently alluded to in the sacred Scriptures (*Isa.* xxxv. 6, 7): "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." The word translated parched ground is, in the original, of the same form as *serab*, the term which the Arabs in the present day employ when speaking of the Mirage.*

This curious illusion has been frequently witnessed by modern travellers. "In the distance," says one, "we observed the well-known phenomenon of the Mirage. At one time it appeared to be a calm flowing water, reflecting on its unruffled surface the trees growing on its banks; while some object in the background assumed the appearance of a splendid residence, amidst a grove of trees. At another time

* See Gesenius *in loc.*

there appeared a castle embosomed in a forest of palms, with a lake of clear water stretched between us and them."

It is, however, when the traveller, as represented above, is tortured by thirst, that the deceptions of the Mirage prove most appalling. A remarkable instance of this occurred during the passage of the French army across the desert at the time of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. "When morning dawned," says the historian who describes the scene, "the army found itself traversing boundless plains of sand without water or shade, and with a burning sun over their heads. All the wells on the road were either filled up or exhausted. Hardly a few drops of muddy or brackish water were to be found to quench their thirst. In the midst of the general depression, a sudden gleam of hope illuminated the countenances of the soldiers. A lake appeared in the wilderness, with villages and palm-trees clearly reflected on its glassy surface. Instantly the parched troops hastened

to the enchanted spot, but it receded from their steps; again they pressed on with burning impatience, but it for ever fled from their approach; and they had at length the mortification of discovering that they had been deceived by the Mirage of the desert."

Under the general term Mirage are also comprehended various atmospherical illusions of a very interesting character. In particular climates, at certain seasons of the year, there are seen in the ocean and the sky representations of cities, groves, mountains, rivers, spacious plains, castles, arches, and rows of superb pilasters. Like some splendid phantasmagoria, they fill the spectator with astonishment and delight, then vanish into air, or assume, with the rapidity of a kaleidoscope, new combinations, even more astonishing and beautiful than those which preceded them. Persons who have witnessed these phenomena have declared that they would rather have seen them than the most magnificent spec-

tacles of art. One writer, describing them, states that the sea suddenly assuming the semblance of a polished mirror, was then immediately, as far as the eye could reach, covered with a series of graceful arches, forming an apparently interminable vista. Some English voyagers, in the Arctic regions, were so enraptured with these splendid visions, as to term the place where they were seen "the enchanted coast." "The general aspect of the coast," says an eye-witness, "was that of an extensive and ancient city, with ruined castles, churches, hills surmounted by turrets, battlements, spires, and pinnacles. Scarcely was one particular object sketched than it assumed a different shape. It was now a castle,—then a cathedral or an obelisk—then, with equal suddenness, it would form a bridge, with an arch some miles in extent, presenting an appearance of the utmost magnificence, but of the most evanescent duration."

Such, in different aspects, is the Mirage of

nature. With the last-mentioned species of it this little work has but a passing connection. Were poetical beauty, however, the object of our illustration, we might dwell upon it, as under a lively emblem portraying the transitoriness of worldly things. As fades the Mirage in the sky, so vanishes terrestrial glory, realizing the words of a poet—

"Where is the world in which a man was born?
Alas! where is the world of eight years past?
'Twas there—I look for it—'tis gone; a globe of glass,
Cracked, shivered, vanished, scarcely gazed upon
Ere a silent change dissolves the glittering mass."

It is from the Mirage of the desert that we propose to illustrate the Mirage of Life. Journeying like a pilgrim across the wilderness of this world, man thirsts for happiness. The Almighty, in his word, proclaims himself the living Fountain at which alone this thirst can be gratified. Despising, however, his gracious invitation, the majority of mankind pursue false and illusive streams, which, promising as they

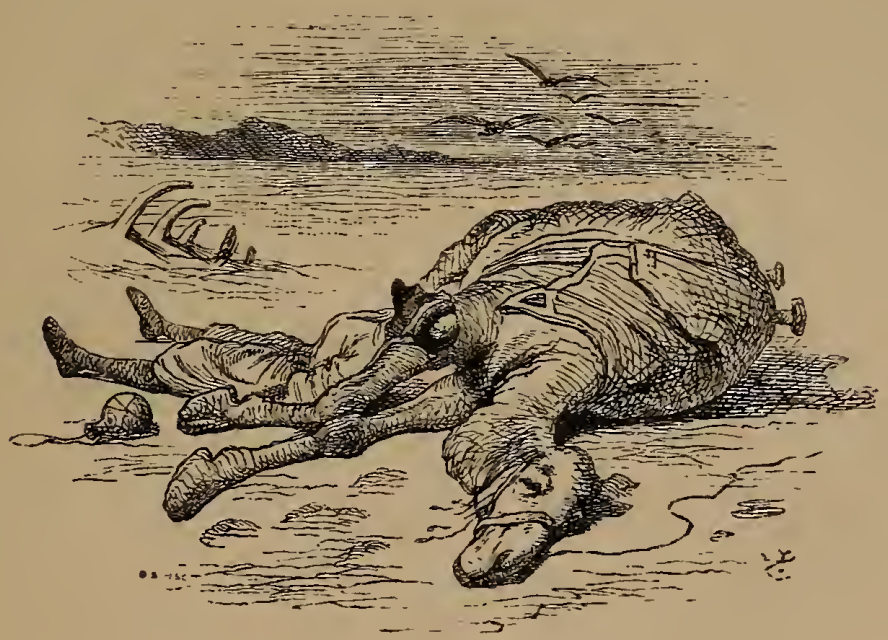
appear in the distance, prove, when approached, deceptive as the Mirage. One man is deceived by the Mirage of Pleasure; another, by the Mirage of Ambition; a third, by the Mirage of Wealth. As each bubble bursts, a new one emerges, until death steps in, and dissipates the illusion for ever.

"In vain the erring world enquires
For some substantial good;
While earth confines their low desires
They live on airy food.

Illusive dreams of happiness
Their eager thoughts employ;
They wake convinced the boasted bliss
Was visionary joy."

Such is the Mirage of Life; a title which we have selected as calculated, under a striking poetical emblem, to warn all, and especially the young, against the allurements of the world. The illustrations by which we propose to explain it will be a series of portraits of men of eminence, in various walks of life, who sought their happiness in worldly pursuits, without

reference to the glory of God. Our aim, accordingly, will be to show—in some instances from their own words, in others from facts more striking than any language—that although these individuals drew the highest prizes in the lottery of life, yet, in forsaking the fountain of living waters, they failed to gain permanent happiness, and found their objects of pursuit, when grasped, only vanity and vexation of spirit.



THE MAN OF FASHION.

THE MAN OF FASHION.

AMIDST the various objects which men have pursued in search of happiness the Mirage of Fashion may be first named. In every age, a large portion of mankind have fixed their affections on the pleasures of dress, frivolous amusements, and trifling gaiety. That man, formed with such high capacities for moral and intellectual enjoyment, should have narrowed his mind to such pursuits, is indeed surprising: that he should have expected happiness in them is still more so. The illusion, it might have been supposed, would at once have been detected, and the pursuit abandoned. Experience has shown, however, that the numbers are not

small of those who have deliberately sought to pervert life to this end. At this moment there are multitudes whose sole aim is to mix in what is termed "good society;" who leave the circle in which Providence has fitted them to be useful, and vainly endeavour to court the favour of those who secretly despise them; who are the slaves of etiquette; who dread what is vulgar much more than what is sinful, and who sacrifice, to the cruel idol of fashion, usefulness, self-respect, and peace. As a terrible warning to all such stands forth the career of GEORGE BRUMMELL, or, *The Man of Fashion.*

This remarkable man was born towards the end of the last century; and, at the early age of sixteen, received a commission as officer in a regiment of Hussars, in which his taste for dress found ample means of gratification. He may be said to have entered life with the full flowing tide of prosperity. He was

the favourite of his brother officers. Royalty itself smiled upon him; and he soon became distinguished for his fashionable manners, refinement of taste, a delicate vein of satire, and a spirit of affectation blended with quaint humour. At the age of twenty-one he succeeded to property of the value of 30,000*l.* principally in ready money. Being now master of his own time, he resolved to devote himself wholly to a life of fashion. Unhappy choice! Could any one, with prophetic vision, have unrolled the future before him, he would have started back from the prospect in horror. A taste in matters of dress was that for which he first laboured to be distinguished; and that so successfully, that the tailors of the metropolis soon learned to regulate the fashions by his decision. The Prince Regent himself would occasionally attend his dressing-room for an hour in the morning, to watch the mysterious grace with which he discharged the duties of the toilet. As Watt

was celebrated in the world of science for the invention of the steam-engine, so was Brummell in the world of fashion for the invention of starched neckcloths. "Call you this nothing?" observes a satirical writer; "I have known many a man with 10,000*l.* a year who never did anything half so useful to his fellow-creatures."

Brummell was, through his intimacy with the Prince Regent, admitted to the highest circles of the nobility. No party was complete without him; and the morning papers, in giving the details of a rout, always placed his name first on the list of untitled guests. He became remarkable for his pretensions to extraordinary refinement, and his freedom from everything that could be termed vulgar. Being asked what was a fair annual allowance to a young man for clothes, he answered that 800*l.* a year might do with *strict* economy. He pretended to be ignorant of the exact geographical position of a place called "The

City;" and being asked if he were fond of vegetables, answered, after a due pause for recollection, that he believed he had once eaten a pea. Not contented with being admitted to the world of fashion, Brummell aimed at being its dictator; and in this he effectually succeeded. For years he gave the law to the highest fashionable circles. A nobleman would think himself honoured by having his arm during a stroll down St. James's Street; and a duchess would tremble at his decision, as what would stamp her unfashionable or otherwise. Such was Beau Brummell in the height of his glory as a man of fashion: the leader of *ton*, the patron of noblemen, the despot of the realms of taste. What a poor and contemptible life! What a waste of existence! But was he happy? Ah, no! Proud and vain, he imagined that his success would continue unbroken; but he was soon to discover that all was evanescent as the Mirage.

Leaving St. James's Street and its fashionable idlers, we must now ask our readers to turn their attention to a provincial town in France. Who is this old man, that, in ragged clothes and with tottering steps, walks feebly along the streets surrounded by children who mock and jeer at him as he goes? His face is familiar to us, and his air, amidst his wretchedness and poverty, speaks of days gone by when better times were his. It is Brummell, the man of fashion, fallen from his high estate! Embarrassed by his extravagance, he had to flee to the Continent, where, deserted by hollow friends, he fell from one degree of wretchedness to another. For a while he pursued, on a diminished scale, his former course; but was at last arrested for debt. His agitation on this occasion was extreme, and he gave way to a burst of tears. Resistance was vain, however, and the gay butterfly of fashion found himself the inmate of a wretched and squalid jail. By some kind

individuals he was released from this abode of misery; but misfortune failed to teach him reflection. He still retained the tastes of his earlier years, though unable from circumstances to gratify them. When at the lowest point of financial distress, he could with difficulty be persuaded, although almost in want of the common necessaries of life, to forego the use of some fashionable blacking which cost five shillings a bottle. Forsaken and forgotten by the sunshine friends of his prosperity, Brummell became to a considerable extent dependent on the kindness of a grocer, one from those humble classes at whose vulgarity he had so often sneered. He who had affected such great fastidiousness in his culinary tastes was glad to obtain a meal at a tradesman's board; and he, too, who had said that it was possible for a man to dress on 800*l.* a year with strict economy, was indebted to a compassionate tailor for mending the holes in his garments, at which time, for lack

of change of raiment, he was obliged to remain in bed until his clothes were returned to him. "He had now," says his biographer, "passed the point at which he was the personification of a broken gentleman." He became a complete sloven. The last remnant of self-respect abandoned him, and, unable to obtain credit, he would beg at a shop for articles for which he was no longer able to pay. His mind was weakened by his misfortunes; and, in his lonely apartment, he would at times imagine that he was giving one of his fashionable parties. His attendant, who humoured him, would announce the arrival of the Duchess of Devonshire, or some distinguished visitor. Rising up, the poor Beau would salute the empty air with ceremonious politeness; then, as if aware of his fallen position, his eyes would fill with childish tears. At ten o'clock the carriages of his imaginary visitors were announced, and the farce was at an end.

Such was Beau Brummell in his fall. Further misfortunes, however, were yet to come. Brummell's reason having partially failed, he was conducted to a madhouse. An English clergyman, who visited him when near his death, tried to touch some chord of religion to which his mind might vibrate. It was, however, all in vain. "Never," says the visitor, who was familiar with the treatment of the insane; "never did I come in contact with such an exhibition of vanity and thoughtlessness. In reply to my entreaties that he would pray, he said, 'I do try;' but he added something which made me doubt whether he understood my meaning." Shortly after this visit, his nurse observed him assume an appearance of extreme anxiety. He fixed his eyes upon her as if asking for assistance. She made him repeat some form of prayer; then, turning on his side, he died.

Such was the end of the man of fashion. We pause not to moralize on his melancholy

career—on the exhibition of selfishness, wasted time, and squandered powers, which it presents. He had devoted himself to the slavery of fashion, and in the end he discovered that he had been deluded by the Mirage.

"Use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."—1 *Cor.* vii. 31.

THE MAN OF WEALTH.

THE MAN OF WEALTH.

A FAR more general object of pursuit than fashion is Wealth. This may be almost termed the universal passion, and it might appear at first sight bold to class its votaries amongst those who are chasing the Mirage. Yet true it is, that however legitimate the possession of wealth, when employed as a talent for promoting the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures, it is, when sought without reference to these ends, a snare and a delusion.

It is deceptive as regards the certainty of its acquisition. A young merchant, intoxicated

with success and full of worldly energy, was a short time since boasting, in the presence of the writer of these pages, that fortunes were to be made in London, and that he had set his heart on acquiring one. Within a few months after he was in his grave.

Wealth is deceptive, also, as regards the enjoyment which it promises to its possessors. The writer was, at one time, in the habit of meeting another merchant, who, almost in the prime of life, had succeeded in realizing a fortune of more than 100,000*l.* by incessant toil. The time for retiring to enjoy his hard-won earnings at last came; but a fit of paralysis, brought on by excessive labour, shattered his frame, and reduced him to a state of pitiable helplessness.

Wealth is further deceptive when viewed with reference to its vanity when acquired. The great Duke of Marlborough used to walk through the rain at night to save sixpence, and accumulated a fortune of a million and a half.

"Would he have taken all this pains," asks a writer, "could he have foreseen that after his death his fortune would, in the course of a few years, pass into the hands of a family which he had always opposed and regarded as his enemies?" Dr. King, in the anecdotes of his own times, speaks of a gentleman of his acquaintance, who went back a long distance to exchange a bad halfpenny which he had taken from the waiter of a coffee-room. He died worth more than 200,000*l.*; but his fortune, from want of a will, was divided amongst six day-labourers, for whom, when living, he had no regard. He had heaped up riches, without knowing who should gather them. A late Scottish nobleman, accompanying a gentleman to the summit of a hill which overlooked his lordship's estates, after explaining that, as far as the eye could reach, the country was his property, stated, in reply to the remark, "Surely your lordship must be a happy man," that he did not believe

there was in all the vast circuit that met their gaze an individual so unhappy as himself. The guilty Colonel Charteris found that piles of wealth were a poor substitute for a peaceful conscience; when dying, he said he would readily give 30,000*l*. to have it proved to his satisfaction that there was no such place as hell. Still more miserable was the career of the well-known Elwes, the miser. When worth more than half a million, he wore clothes so ragged that many persons, mistaking him for a common street beggar, would put a penny into his hand as they passed. He would pick up bones and rags. He would glean with his tenants in his fields, and complain bitterly of the birds robbing him of so much hay with which to build their nests. He, however, gained his end in life. He accumulated nearly a million of money, but found, when he had done so, that the object of his search was full of dissatisfaction. His last days, we are told,

were embittered by anxiety about the preservation of his property. He would start from his sleep, exclaiming, "My money! my money! You shall not rob me of my money." At the dead of night he was found wandering through his house, bemoaning the loss of a five-pound note, which he had hid in a place that he could not remember; and, although then a millionaire, protesting that the note was nearly all he had in the world! His last hours were filled with gloom and anxiety. He died wretched and unhappy, possessing such extensive wealth, and yet finding it unable to supply the wants of an immortal spirit.

Leaving, however, various other forms in which the Mirage of wealth might be exemplified, we shall confine ourselves to one more illustration, namely, the *instability* of riches, and select for our type, WILLIAM BECKFORD of Fonthill, or, *The Man of Wealth.*

William Beckford was born towards the middle of the eighteenth century. He was the only son of a wealthy West Indian proprietor, who, dying when his child was ten years of age, left an income of more than 100,000*l.* a year, to accumulate until the boy should reach his majority. Young Beckford's mental powers were good, and no pains were spared in cultivating them by a refined education. Sir William Chambers instructed him in architecture, and the eminent Mozart taught him music. At twenty-one, with the income of a prince, and accumulations in ready money to the amount of about a million sterling, he launched upon the world. How vast were the capacities of usefulness placed before him! His income might have banished penury from whole districts of his country. The great talent of promoting human happiness was placed within his reach; but he threw the golden opportunity away. Proud and haughty, the youthful Beckford withdrew

from the active business of life; and retiring to the Continent, devoted himself to a life of luxurious ease. Settling after a time in Portugal, he there lavished his wealth upon a charming villa, which a poet, who visited it when in ruins, has described in the following lines :—

"Here, too, thou, Beckford—England's wealthiest son—
Once formed thy paradise, as not aware
When wanton Wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,
Meek Peace voluptuous snares was ever wont to shun:
Here didst thou dwell; here schemes of pleasure plan,
Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow.
But now, as if a thing unblest by man,
Thy lonely dwelling is as lone as thou.
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide;
Fresh lessons to unthinking mortals, how
Vain are the pleasaunces on earth supplied,
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide."

During Beckford's residence in Portugal, he visited, under the royal sanction, some of the wealthy and luxurious monasteries of that country. It is difficult to convey an idea of the pomp and splendour of this journey,

which resembled more the cavalcade of an eastern prince than the tour of a private individual. "Everything," he himself says, "that could be thought or dreamed of for our convenience or relaxation was carried in our train—nothing was left behind but care and sorrow." "The ceiling of my apartment in the monastery," he adds, "was gilded and painted; the floor spread with Persian carpets of the finest texture; the tables decked with superb ewers and basins of chased silver." The kitchen in which his dinner was prepared is thus described: "A stream of water flowed through it, from which were formed reservoirs containing every kind of river-fish. On one side were heaped up loads of game and venison; on the other side were vegetables and fruit, in endless variety. Beyond a long line of stores extended a row of ovens, and close to them hillocks of wheaten flour, finer than snow; rocks of sugar, jars of the purest oil, and pastry in various abundance."

The dinner which followed these preparations was served in a magnificent saloon of the monastery, covered with pictures, and lighted up with a profusion of wax tapers in sconces of silver. "The banquet," he adds, "consisted of rarities and delicacies, of every season, from distant countries." Confectionery and fruits awaited the party in a room still more sumptuous, where vessels of Goa filigree, containing the rarest and most fragrant spices, were handed round. Such was Beckford's mode of life during this journey. Painful recollections are awakened, when perusing this narrative, of a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.

Returning, at the commencement of the present century, to his native country, Beckford again abandoned himself to an unwise enjoyment of his wealth. Taking a capricious dislike to a splendid mansion on his estate, which had been erected by his father at a vast cost,

he ordered it to be pulled down. He resolved that, phœnix-like, there should arise from its ruins a building which should surpass in magnificence all that hitherto had been known in English art. Fonthill Abbey, one of the wonders of the West of England, was the result of this determination. Whole galleries of that vast pile were apparently erected for the sole purpose of enabling Beckford to emblazon on their windows the crests of the families from whom he boasted his descent. The wonder of the fabric, however, was a tower of colossal dimensions and great height, erected somewhat in the manner and spirit of those who once reared a similar structure on the plains of Shinar: "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name."

To complete the erection of Beckford's princely pile, almost every cart in the county was employed, so that at one time agricultural labour was well-nigh suspended. Impatient of

delay, night, at one period, was not allowed to impose obstacles to the progress of the work. Torch-light was employed; fresh bands of labourers relieving at evening those who worked by day. In the dark nights of winter, the distant traveller was startled by the blaze of light from Fonthill, which proclaimed at once the resources and the folly of the man of wealth. Beckford's principal enjoyment was in watching the erection of this structure. At nightfall he would repair to some elevated grounds, and there, in solitude, would feast his eyes for hours with the singular spectacle presented by the dancing of the lights, and the play of their light on the neighbouring forest. The building seemed, indeed, Beckford's idol — the object for which he lived. He devoted the whole of his energies to make it realize the most fascinating visions of an excited imagination.

After the completion of the abbey, Beckford's conduct was still more extraordinary. A wall,

twelve feet high, surrounded his mansion and grounds, the latter of which were so arranged as to contain walks and rides twenty miles in extent. Within this mysterious circle scarcely any visitors were allowed to pass. In stately grandeur he dwelt alone, shunning converse with the world around. Majesty itself, so ran the rumour, was desirous of visiting this wonderful domain, but was refused admittance. Strangers would disguise themselves as servants, as peasants, or as pedlars, in the hope of catching even a transient glimpse at its glories. Nor was its interior unworthy of this curiosity. All that art and wealth could give, to produce effect, were there. "Gold and silver vases and cups," says one who saw the place, "are so numerous here that they dazzle the eye; and when one looks round at the cabinets, candelabras, and ornaments which decorate the room, we may almost imagine that we stand in the treasury of some oriental prince, whose riches consist entirely in vessels

of gold and silver enriched with precious stones of every sort, from the ruby to the diamond."*

Such was Beckford of Fonthill. With an income of more than 100,000*l.* per annum, he seemed above the reach of fortune. Who would have ventured to style all this splendour evanescent as the Mirage? And yet it was so. A sudden depreciation of West Indian property took place. Some lawsuits terminated unfavourably, and embarrassments poured in like a flood on the princely owner. The gates which had refused admittance to a monarch were rudely thrust open by a sheriff's officer.

* The grounds of Fonthill seem to have been almost as beautiful as the interior. There were all varieties of surface; winding vale, steep ridge, hill, dell, knoll, and lake, clumps and masses of oak and pine; solitude for the poet and painter; terraces; a flower garden unmatched in England; American plantations filled with the trees and flowering shrubs of North America. Here were extent, repose, and majesty for the pencil of Claude; the rugged grandeur that would affect Ruysdael; and the deep and savage wildness which suited the genius of Salvator Rosa.

The mansion, erected at so vast an expense, was sold. The greater part of the costly treasures were scattered by the hammer of the auctioneer; and Beckford driven, with the shattered fragments of a fortune, to spend his old age in a watering-place; there to muse on the instability of wealth; there to feel how little pleasure the retrospect of neglected talents can give, and to point the oft-told moral of the vanity of human pursuits. He fell, it is said, unpitied. The noblest opportunities of conferring happiness had been placed within his reach, and had been thrown away. What could he now show for the amount of wealth intrusted to his stewardship? Little more than a heap of rubbish! a dismantled mansion in Portugal, and two ruined dwellings in England. The tower, which he had erected at so great a cost, fell to the ground, and Fonthill Abbey was pulled down by its new owner.

Thus melted away, like frostwork before the

sun, the extravagant productions of the man of wealth. His whole life had been a sad misapplication of the talents committed to his care, and in the end he discovered that he had been cheated by the Mirage.

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."—1 *Tim.* vi. 17.

THE HERO.

THE HERO.

ANOTHER object of eager ardent pursuit to a large number of our fellow-creatures is Military Glory. Multitudes seek the "bubble reputation" as the chief end of life, indifferent to the scenes of misery with which it is so closely connected. Few illusions, however, are in general more speedily dissipated than this. The youth who, dazzled by a brilliant uniform, allured by the gaieties and dissipation of the mess-room, or impelled by the love of adventure, quits his native country in search of "glory," soon finds his visions dispersed by the stern realities of a camp, and the hardships of a military life.

In the journal of a soldier in the 72nd

regiment, published at the conclusion of the last general continental war, an instance of this occurs. The author of it had been induced, in hopes of a life of pleasure, to enlist in the army, and to forsake his home, greatly to the grief of his parents. A few years afterwards, he was, when serving in the Peninsula, glad to be allowed to eat of the biscuits which he was employed to break for the hounds of the commander-in-chief, at a time when provisions were scarce. "I ate them with tears," he says, "and thought of the Prodigal Son."

Full of self-confidence, the young soldiers who attended Napoleon in his expedition to Moscow shouted as they left Paris, "We shall be back in six months!" They dreamed of conquest; but it was only the Mirage. In a few months the mighty host of Napoleon, except a small remnant, was buried in the snows of Russia.

In the life of Lord Nelson, it is striking to

observe that, nearly at the time when the various potentates of Europe were showering down upon this hero presents of diamond-hilted swords, gold snuff-boxes, and crosses of honour, he was himself unable to enjoy his greatness, having for months been deprived of sleep by the injury done to a nerve in the amputation of one of his arms. Lally, a great French general in the last century, was rewarded by an ungrateful country with an ignominious death for his reverses in India. Suwarroff, the brave Russian general, after having served his empress and his country with great distinction, was treated in his declining years with mortifying neglect.

"On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
How just his hopes let Swedish Charles decide; . . .
His fall was destined to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale."

One of the most remarkable instances, however, of the Mirage of military glory, and its

inability, even when enjoyed to its full extent, to confer happiness on its possessor, is to be found in the life of LORD CLIVE, the founder of the British empire in India, whom we now select as our type of *The Hero.*

Robert, afterwards Lord Clive, was born in Shropshire, in the year 1729, of parents in no way distinguished for opulence or rank. In early life he displayed strong indications of those remarkable qualities which developed themselves in after years. The people of Market Drayton, it is said, long remembered stories told them by their parents of the future conqueror of India terrifying the village by climbing to the pinnacle of the church steeple, and perching himself on a stone spout near the summit. Clive, so runs the tradition, organized a little regiment, composed of his schoolfellows, and, in the true spirit of a military commander, levied a tribute of halfpence from the shop-keepers, as a species of tax for protecting their

windows from being broken. It is related also, by Clive's biographer, that on one occasion when a dam broke (which the boys had made across the street for the purpose of overflowing the shop of a refractory tradesman, who had probably declined payment of the tribute just mentioned), Clive unhesitatingly threw his body across the aperture in the work, and thus remained until the breach was repaired.

At an early period of his life, Clive proceeded as a mercantile clerk to India, having received employment in the East India Company's service. The possessions of that body were then small and limited, and its troops scarcely numerous enough to man a few batteries. Madras was the point to which the youthful hero first bent his steps. On his arrival there he soon gave marks of his determined spirit and insensibility to fear. He chastised a person who had been the bully of his regiment, and gained a reputation for energy and decision of character. Amongst the various requisites, however, for

true success which he had taken with him to India, one was forgotten—the fear of God was not before his eyes. Dejected by some trifling disappointment, he twice attempted to commit suicide. Twice the pistol was raised to his head; but twice the trigger refused to move. Shortly afterwards a friend came in, and Clive desired him to fire the same pistol out of the window. He did so, and the weapon was discharged with ease. Clive was filled, not with gratitude at the forbearing mercy of God, but with selfish elation. "I see," he exclaimed, "that I am reserved for something great." He soon after this resigned his situation as a clerk, and obtained an ensigncy in a regiment of foot.

It would be impracticable, even if it were desirable, to give in this work a sketch of his wonderful career. When a mere youth, he signalised himself by raising, with a handful of men, the siege of an important city. The whole of his force consisted of 200 Englishmen

and 300 native soldiers. Of the eight officers who accompanied him only two had before been in action. The weather was stormy; but Clive pushed on, through rain, lightning, and thunder, to the gates of the city. The besieging party, in alarm, withdrew on his approach, without striking a blow. Afterwards, however, they returned to the attack, and, with elephants whose heads were armed with iron plates, endeavoured to batter down the gates of the city, but in vain. They next tried to starve Clive and his garrison; and it was then that the Hindoo soldiers under his command made their memorable speech: "Give us," they said, "as provisions are failing, give us the water in which the rice is boiled: it is sufficient for our support. Let the Europeans take the grain."

Such was the commencement of Clive's military career; and the remainder corresponded with it. He laid the foundation of the British empire in India; and displayed, although untaught in the art of war, a genius equal to that

of the most experienced commanders. Victory succeeded victory. His history is one roll of successes. No scruple of conscience, however, was allowed to check him, when expediency appeared to demand an opposite course. "He no sooner," says Mr. Macaulay, "found himself matched against an Indian intriguer, than he became himself one, and descended to falsehood, to hypocritical caresses, to the substitution of documents, and to the counterfeiting of signatures." He had aimed, however, at worldly greatness, and he gained his end. Wealth was heaped upon him in piles. One Indian prince gave him a pension of 30,000*l.* a year; and on another occasion added to it a present of 300,000*l.* There was, indeed, no limit to his acquisitions but his own moderation. "Had you seen," said he, on one occasion, "the treasury of the Nabob, and the piles of gold, silver, and diamonds, amidst which I walked, you would have thought me moderate in taking the above sum."

He gained the highest honours also. When a youth of twenty-seven, he received from the East India Company a diamond-hilted sword; and was thrice appointed by it to the highest offices at its disposal. His sovereign elevated him to the peerage; and the great Earl of Chatham praised him, in the British senate, as a distinguished genius, and a master of the art of war. "The whole kingdom," wrote his father, "is in transports at the glory and success you have gained. Come away, and let us rejoice together." Laden with honours, with wealth, which he used not ungenerously, and with glory, Clive returned to England in the prime of life, intending to devote himself to the enjoyment of his immense fortune. Here, then, it may be thought, was one, at least, whose acquisitions were substantial—who had found the substance and not the shadow. Alas! it was only the Mirage. The years of enjoyment to which he had looked forward were filled with melancholy and dissatisfaction. Some important reforms

which he had introduced into the government of India provoked opposition and raised up bitter enemies. An impeachment against him, contemplated in the House of Commons, threatened to strip him of all his wealth. It was with some difficulty quashed; but Clive's spirits never recovered the blow. Having sought prosperity without reference to the favour of God, his mind, in the retrospect of life, could find no point of satisfaction on which it might repose. Wedded to glory, and pluming himself on his vast achievements, his pride was wounded and his feelings lacerated by the ungrateful treatment which he had received. Broken health, too, began to afflict him. He, who had conquered so many provinces, was unable, apparently, to subdue his own spirit; and poor amidst abundant wealth—wretched amidst a load of honours—the soldier of fortune terminated his life by his own hand. Such was the end of a military career brilliant with success, but uncontrolled by religious principle. He had

pursued "glory" as his end in life, and he had found it the Mirage.

"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth."—*Jer.* ix. 23, 24.

THE STATESMAN.

THE STATESMAN.

FROM the career of the military hero, let us turn to that of the Statesman. He seeks his enjoyment in the gratification of ambition; in administering the affairs of nations, and in commanding by his patronage a crowd of adherents and dependants. From its very nature, this object of pursuit is necessarily limited to a few, and those men of high intellectual capacity. With the opportunity which it presents, however, of conferring large and extensive benefits on mankind, no career, when directed with an

eye to the glory of God and the welfare of mankind, might be more satisfactory than that of the statesman. There have been few in which the Mirage of life has been more apparent. Cardinal Wolsey, after climbing the highest round of ambition's ladder, was, in the evening of life, constrained to exclaim—that had he served his God as faithfully as he had done his king, He would not have abandoned him in his old age. The closing words of Colbert, the minister of Louis XIV., echoed the same sentiment. The dying hours of Cardinal Mazarin, the ambitious French statesman, were clouded with gloom and chagrin. He wandered, we are told, along his splendid picture-gallery, bidding his works of art a mournful farewell, and exclaiming, "Must I quit all these?" * Necker, the celebrated minister of Louis XVI., was such a favourite with the French nation, that he was hon-

* See *Life's Last Hours*, published by the Religious Tract Society.

oured with this inscription on his door—"The residence of the adored minister." He was afterwards compelled to secure his safety by flight from the fickle people who had honoured him with almost idolatrous homage.

The career of Warren Hastings, governor-general of India, is another apt illustration of the Mirage of political ambition. After tasting, for a series of years, the sweets of oriental luxury, and enjoying uncontrolled authority over millions of his fellow-creatures, he was at last stripped of his power; and at a time when he reasonably anticipated honours from the hand of his sovereign, was exposed to a trial of nine years' duration, which left him deprived of the wealth he had by very equivocal means acquired. The late Lord Melville was likewise a memorable instance of the unsatisfactory character of worldly ambition. We speak not here of the impeachment which embittered the close of his life, but of the period of his unclouded political splendour. The late Sir John

Sinclair had passed a few days with him at his country villa, and on a new year's morning entered his apartment to offer him the customary compliments of the season. He found the statesman perusing some important documents, and wished him a happy new year. On receiving the salutation, Lord Melville, after a pause, replied, "It has need to be a happier one than the last, for I scarcely remember a happy day in it." Coming as this did from the lips of a man envied by all for his greatness—"My father," says the narrator of the anecdote, "would often quote it to us, as a proof of the vanity of human wishes." As a still more striking instance, however, of the cares and perplexities which haunt the path of ambition, we select as our leading illustration the celebrated WILLIAM PITT, or, *The Statesman.*

This remarkable man was the son of a no less remarkable father, the great Earl of Chatham, and was trained under his eye to public

life. When a boy, he displayed remarkable powers of mind, and gave prognostics of future eminence. He entered parliament a mere youth, but aided by everything which could encourage hopes of a brilliant career. His sovereign, the senate, and the people were alike disposed to regard him with favour for his parent's sake. His first speech confirmed their anticipations. No sooner had he delivered it than public opinion strongly declared itself, and all parties confessed that the mantle of his father had fallen upon him. At the age of twenty-four, a period when the generality of young men are discharging duties of a probationary character, he was made prime minister. He was now first in position, as he was first in intellectual power, among the commons of England. Let a young man dwell upon his lot, and he will be apt to think that it contained all the elements of happiness. He was emphatically the favourite of his sovereign, to a degree which it had been the privilege of few

before him to enjoy. He was the idol of a numerous party in the senate, and of a large and influential body of supporters in the kingdom. The mightiest intellects bent before him, and the highest offices were in his patronage. Each morning when he rose, he was entitled to assert that, in all the vast empire of England, the sun shone on no one who was in reality, however he might be in name, more powerful than himself. Add to all this the possession of youth and the prospect of length of days, and we have drawn, in the world's estimation, a picture containing much to envy. And yet even this was but the Mirage.

It was deception, as regarded his own personal enjoyment during his career of greatness. In vain should we look for any proofs of this in the biographies of Pitt, published by his political admirers, shortly after his death. There we meet chiefly a narrative of flattering success.* A few years ago, however, an

* But see *Edinburgh Review*, July 1862.

account of his domestic life appeared in the memoirs of the lady who had superintended the arrangements of his household. "People," said this writer, "little knew what Mr. Pitt had to do. Up at eight in the morning, with people enough to see for a week. Obliged to talk all the time he was at breakfast; receiving first one and then another, until four o'clock. Then eating a mutton chop; hurrying off to the House, and there badgered and compelled to waste his lungs till two or three in the morning. Who could stand it? After this, heated as he was, and having eaten nothing in a manner, he would sup with Dundas, Huskisson, Rose, Long, and such like, and then go to bed and get three or four hours' sleep, to renew the same thing the next day, and the next. During the sitting of parliament, what a life he led! Roused from his sleep, with a despatch from Lord Melville; then down to Windsor; then, if he had half an hour to spare, trying to swallow something. Mr. Adams with a paper; Mr.

Long with another. Then, with a little bottle of cordial confection in his pocket, off to the House until three or four in the morning. Then home for a hot supper for two or three hours more, to talk over what was to be done next day; and wine—and wine—and wine. Scarcely up next morning, when, tat-tat-tat, twenty or thirty people, one after another, and the horses walking before the door from two till sunset, waiting for him. It was murder." Such was the private life of a prime minister, whose position was the object of envy to numbers. Alas! how little was it to be coveted.

But the life of this great man was in other respects also an exemplification of the vanity of human pursuits. "During his long career of office," says one of his warmest admirers, "he could scarcely get a gleam of success to cheer him." He was disappointed too in an attachment which he had formed to a young lady of rank and great personal attractions. Added to this, his affairs gradually became embarrassed,

and he found his spirits and energies depressed by a load of debt. His weakened frame succumbed soon afterwards to an attack of disease. His temper, also, was soured by the ingratitude which he experienced. "All the peers," says the writer above quoted, "whom he had made deserted him, and half of those whom he had served returned his kindness by going over to his enemies."

The final stroke at last came. A brilliant effort of his genius to crush the hydra-headed power of Napoleon was defeated by the battle of Austerlitz. Chagrined, disappointed, crowded with anxieties, this blow was too much for the statesman to bear, and he found the hand of death upon him. Had he then the consolations of religion to rest upon? Ah no! On his dying bed he is stated to have exclaimed, "I fear I have neglected prayer too much to make it available on a death-bed." He soon afterwards died. "In the adjoining room," says a contemporary writer, "he lay a corpse in

the ensuing week; and it is a singular and melancholy circumstance, resembling the stories told of William the Conqueror's deserted state at his decease, that some one in the neighbourhood having sent a messenger to enquire after Mr. Pitt's state, the latter found the wicket open, then the door of the house, and walked through the rooms till he reached the bed on which the minister's body lay lifeless, the sole tenant of the mansion of which the doors a few hours before had been darkened by crowds of suitors, alike obsequious and importunate—the vultures whose instinct leads them to haunt only the carcases of living ministers."* He died in his forty-seventh year, on the anniversary of the day on which he had first entered parliament. What a difference was there

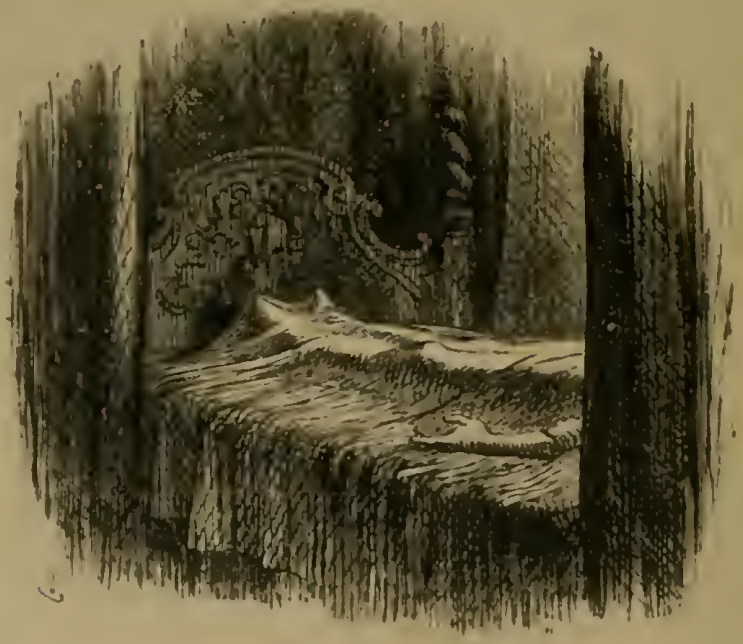
* The author of the *Life of Lady Hester Stanhope* gives, but as we think erroneously, the passage as an extract from Lord Brougham's *Lives of Eminent Statesmen*. The incident carries with it, however, internal evidence of its probability, from the confused and disorderly manner in which the arrangements of Mr. Pitt's household were managed by his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope.

between the buoyant youth of twenty and the careworn statesman of forty-seven! Before the eyes of the one sparkled a long vista of political enjoyments and honours; before the eyes of the other were the anxieties and cares which had attended them when grasped. He had too much followed as his object in life unsanctified ambition, and he had found it the Mirage.

"How do these events," wrote at the time Mr. Wilberforce, the friend of Pitt; "how do these events tend to illustrate the vanity of worldly greatness! Poor Pitt, I almost believe, died of a broken heart. A broken heart! What! was he like Otway, or Collins, or Chatterton, who had not so much as a needful complement of food to sustain their bodies, while the consciousness of unrewarded talents and mortified pride pressed them within, and ate out their very souls? Was he even like Suwarroff, another most useful example, basely deserted and driven into exile by the sovereign he had so long served? No; he was

the highest in power and estimation in the whole kingdom; the favourite, I believe, on the whole, both of king and people. Yes; this man, who died of a broken heart, was First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer!"

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."—*Eccles.* ii. 11.



THE ORATOR.

THE ORATOR.

CLOSELY connected with the pursuits of the statesman are those of the Orator. To shine in the senate, to dazzle by brilliant talent, and to sway contending parties by commanding intellect, constitute his happiness. When directed to right ends and influenced by right principles, the career of the orator is not to be condemned. His office is to denounce vice, and to shield virtue; and, like one who used this talent for Christian purposes,—the eminent Wilberforce,—to aid by eloquence the cause of evangelical truth. As an illustration, however, of its inability,

when unsanctified, to produce happiness, we proceed, omitting minor examples, to sketch the career of RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN, or, *The Orator.*

This remarkable man was early distinguished for mental ability. To use the language of the poet—

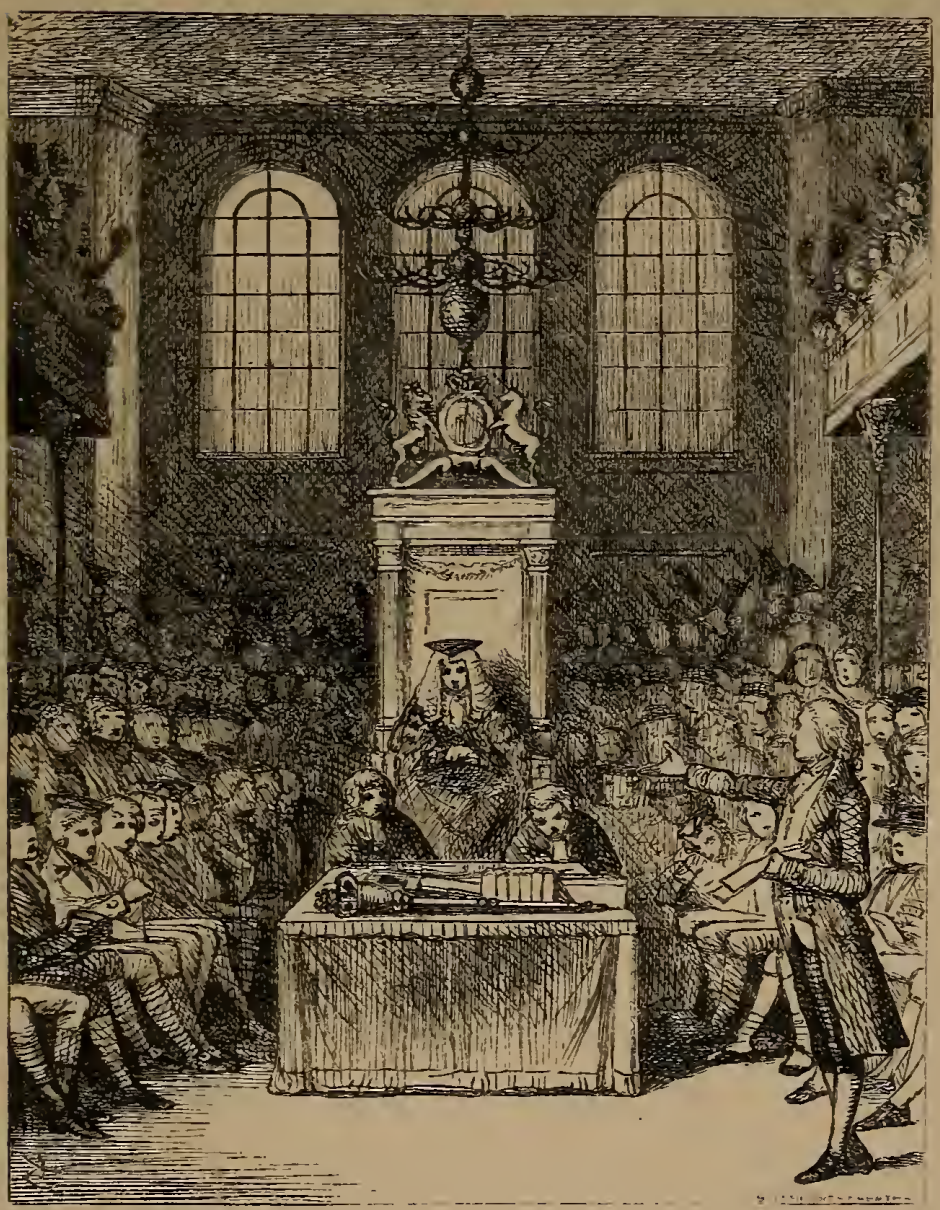
"His mind was an essence, compounded with art
From the finest and best of all other men's powers:
He ruled like a wizard the world of the heart,
And could call up its sunshine or draw down its showers."

Like some other men of genius, he was averse to application, and has been well described as having, through life, acted upon two rules: "Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow;" and, "Never do yourself what you can get another person to do for you." His early course of frivolity and gaiety might of itself have pointed a moral; but it is with his career as an orator that we have now to

do. Although sprung from the middle ranks, and possessed only of slender means, he was enabled ere long to obtain a seat in Parliament. Shortly after gaining this distinction, the memorable trial of Warren Hastings, for malversation in his office as governor-general of India, took place. It was an occasion which called forth the eloquence of Burke, and which developed the highest powers of the eminent statesmen who adorned that period of English history. Westminster Hall was the scene of the trial, and that place, at the early stages of the proceedings, was crowded with all that was great and intellectual in the land. "The whole scene," says Sheridan's biographer, "was one of those pageants in the drama of life which show us what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue." On this grand arena for intellectual display Sheridan shone conspicuous above all competitors. A speech which he delivered drew forth the

following acknowledgment from one who listened to it: "All the various species of oratory, every kind of eloquence that had been heard either in ancient or modern times, whatever the acuteness of the bar, the dignity of the senate, or the morality of the pulpit could furnish, had not been equal to what the house had that day heard in Westminster Hall. From poetry up to eloquence there was not a specimen of composition of which some variety might not have been culled from that speech."

Wonderful, however, as this oratorical effort was, it fell short in its results of another, which, in the course of the same cause, Sheridan made on the floor of the House of Commons. Not only did his speech draw forth the applause of all parties in that house, but it seemed to have entranced them, and bound them with a magician's spell; for they were compelled to adjourn their deliberations to



another day, until the excitement produced by it had disappeared. When Sheridan sat down, Mr. Burke rose, and said it was the most astonishing effort of eloquence, wit, and argument united, which he had ever heard. Mr. Fox stated that all that he too had ever heard or read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun. Mr. Pitt acknowledged that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind. Sir William Dolben immediately moved an adjournment of the house, confessing that in the state of mind in which Mr. Sheridan's speech had left him, it was impossible to give any determinate opinion. Nothing but a miracle, he thought, could have determined him to vote against Mr. Hastings; but he had just felt the operation of such a miracle.

Sheridan's fame as an orator was now the great topic of public conversation. "What my feelings are," wrote his brother, "you may imagine. It is with some difficulty that I can let down my mind to think of anything else but your speech." His father, as he walked the streets, was gratified by persons turning round and pointing to him as the parent of the great orator. Sheridan now stood on the pinnacle of his glory. He was the favourite of his political party, the intimate companion of his prince and of the highest nobility. He had gained the most flattering distinctions. But his talents were unsanctified; and he was destined to feel, by bitter experience, that the objects which he had so keenly pursued were deceptive as the Mirage.

Unsustained by religious principle, he plunged into pleasures and expenses which left him a ruined man. Old age came upon

him, and found him impoverished and deserted by his friends. "His distresses," says his biographer, "increased every day. He was driven to part with what he most valued. His books, presented to him by various friends, now stood in their splendid bindings on the shelves of the pawnbrokers. The handsome cup given him by the electors of Stafford shared the same fate; and the portrait of his first wife, if not actually sold, vanished away from his eyes into other hands." One of the most humiliating trials was, however, yet to follow. He was arrested for debt, and carried to a sponging-house. This abode formed a sad contrast to the princely halls of which he had before been the most brilliant and favoured guest. The unhappy man burst into a flood of tears. He was released; but only to be exposed again to similar trials. "Oh, let me see you," he wrote, on another occasion of the same kind, to a friend; "I find things so settled that 150*l.*

would remove every difficulty. . . . I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted." Misfortunes crowded round his dying bed, and his last moments were haunted by fear of a prison. Forsaken by his gay associates, dispirited and world-weary, he closed his eyes in gloom and sorrow.

No sooner was he dead, however, than many a titled and wealthy associate, who had failed to minister to his sickness, flocked to attend his funeral—conduct which drew forth the indignant, though too indiscriminating, remonstrance of his compatriot Moore :

"Oh ! it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
And friendships so false in the great and high-born ;
To think what a long line of titles may follow
The relics of him who died friendless and lorn :
How proud they can press to the funeral array
Of him whom they shunned in his sickness and sorrow ;
How bailiffs may seize the last blanket to-day,
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow."

Such was the career of the orator. Fame, popularity, and intellectual greatness had all

been his; but, directed to the service of this world, and animated by its spirit, they had proved to their possessor false as the Mirage.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."—1 *Cor.* xiii. 1.

THE ARTIST.

THE ARTIST.

It may be said that the individuals whose career we have noticed in the preceding pages sought their happiness in objects of a material and secular character. Let us shift our sketches, therefore, and select, as our next examples, some whose pursuits were of a more purely intellectual order. First in this class we shall place the Artist. His enjoyment lies in indulging the conceptions of his genius, and, by a subordinate species of creative power, making them glow on the canvas or breathe

in the marble. Although capable, when rightly and religiously directed, of being eminently profitable; yet, when pursued, on merely worldly principles, the career of the artist has often furnished a painful illustration of the Mirage of life.

Some years ago, a young artist, whose death occurred under painful circumstances, left as his closing testimony the mournful sentence—"Life, they say, is sweet; I have found it bitter." The sentiment has been echoed by many others. The biography of the late David Scott, a gifted Scottish painter, seems indeed a comment upon these words. "The love of art," he wrote, "has become to me a torment, an insatiable demon." He plotted, we are told, with the sleeplessness of a poet, and laboured with the energy of an enthusiast. His pictures, however, in almost unbroken succession, returned to him unsold, and he died at the early age of forty-two, with the dream and the hope of his life unfulfilled.

Proctor, a young British sculptor, may be selected as affording another illustration of the Mirage of art. His early essay in marble — Diomede torn to pieces by wild horses—was considered, by competent judges, to approach, in grandeur of thought, the Phidiac period of Greek design. It was however, above the comprehension of ordinary visitors. It was carried back, unsold, to the young sculptor; who, in the anguish of disappointment, broke in pieces with his own hand the work of sleepless hours, on which he had exhausted his little means of support He died, as brighter days were dawning on him, from disease brought on by want and agitated passions.

Another name, in connection with this part of our subject, will occur to many readers as a still more striking illustration—that of Benjamin Robert Haydon, or, *The Artist.*

Haydon was born in one of the seaports

in the West of England towards the close of the last century. Meeting accidentally with the lectures of Sir Joshua Reynolds on painting, he read them through at a single sitting, and determined from that moment to be a painter. In vain did his friends endeavour to alter his decision; he met all opposition with a torrent of sarcasm. In 1802, at the age of eighteen, with only twenty pounds in his pocket, he started for London, full of enthusiasm and buoyant with youthful hope. A portrait of him, painted at this early period, has been preserved. "There is," says a writer, when contrasting it with another likeness of the artist, taken only a few days before his death; "there is a melancholy interest in contemplating these portraits; alike, and yet how different! In the interval between them, forty-one years of an anxious life had rolled over the head of the ambitious and sensitive man of genius. The buoyant hopes and bright prospects of

the youthful aspirant after fame had disappeared in the strongly-marked lines and careworn features of the world-weary and disappointed man of sixty."

Haydon was not long in London before his genius was discovered. Young as he was, he was not contented with following the beaten track, but aimed at founding a new school of painting. The picture of the Judgment of Solomon was, ere long, produced by him. It brought the artist 800*l.* and obtained great applause. The celebrated painter West was so affected when looking at it, that he shed tears.

Haydon's painting of our Saviour's entrance into Jerusalem was at last produced. It attracted a crowd of visitors, and yielded the successful artist a rich harvest, both of money and reputation. His fame was now at its zenith. A writer of the day complimented him by styling him the Raphael of his age. Keats and Mitford composed verses in his

honour, and Wordsworth conferred on him the distinction of a sonnet. He had grasped, then, the fame which as a youth he had so eagerly longed for. Unlike many artists, he had not been doomed to toil on in neglect, but had had his merits recognised by the age in which he lived. Had he then found the secret of happiness, which so many had missed? Ah, no! he, too, had only chased the Mirage.

An unhappy disposition provoked enemies. Embarrassments, too, in quick succession flowed in upon him. His best works were achieved under circumstances of privation: one of them when he was a prisoner for debt. He succeeded in educating his children only by great exertions and extraordinary self-denial. He was mortified, also, by seeing the public manifest a distaste for his peculiar style of art; and each year he was doomed, with sickening heart, to see the wave of popularity recede farther and farther from his feet. He

at last determined to make one more effort to woo back the favour he had lost, by an exhibition of some of his most elaborate works at the Egyptian Hall; and no passage in the history of neglected artists is more melancholy than this scene in his life. Having made his preparations at some expense, and earnestly appealed to the public, the poor painter anxiously waited the result.

Let his diary, however, tell his story. It is headed by this startling quotation from a speech of Canning relative to the fall of Napoleon: "All is but folly: his final destruction can neither be averted nor delayed; and his unseasonable mummeries will but serve to take away all dignity from the drama, and render his fall at once terrible and ridiculous."

The opening entry in the journal is as follows: "April 4. The first day of my exhibition opened. It rained all day, and no one came. . . . How different would it

have been twenty-six years ago! The rain would not then have kept them away." A few weeks afterwards he again writes: "My receipts are only 1*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.* An advertisement of a finer description could not have been written to catch the public; but not one shilling more was added to the receipts. They rush by thousands to see Tom Thumb" (the well-known dwarf of that name, who was exhibited in an adjoining apartment); "they push, they fight, they cry, 'help,' and 'murder.' They see my bills and caravans, but do not read them. Their eyes are on them, but their senses are gone. . . . . My situation is now one of extreme peril. Involved in debt, and mortified by the little sympathy shown to me by the public . . . . I have just received a lawyer's letter. I sat down to my palette under an irritable influence. My brain became confused, as I foresaw misery, ruin, and a prison before me."

It is not necessary to add much more, for

the result is well known. The mind of the unhappy artist gave way; and death, in one of its most appalling forms, stepped in and closed the scene. Not the least impressive portion of Haydon's journal are its closing words: "May 14. This day forty-two years ago I left my native Plymouth for London. I have closed my exhibition, with a loss of 111*l.*"

How different the concluding from the opening scene of the artist's life! How painful the contrast, between the youthful aspirant of 1802 and the careworn painter of 1846! Where now were his ambitious hopes and views? All dissolved in empty air; and proved, by painful experience, to have been unsubstantial as the Mirage.

"It is impossible," adds an able writer of the day, when commenting on the melancholy fate of Haydon, "to read, without feelings of inexpressible pain, the notes which this unfortunate gentleman has left of his daily hopes and emotions, his successive struggles

and disappointments, through the last month of a cheerless professional existence. With exertions of the most exhausting kind he had completed a laborious task, to which he looked forward with the natural confidence of his profession as a release from his perplexities and a recompense of his pains. He offered to the public the first of a series of paintings on a noble and national subject, conceived with grandeur, and directed towards the highest objects of his art. When the day of trial came, he saw his hopes dashed and his efforts spurned; while the patronage which would have ransomed his pencil and restored his peace was lavished on an exhibition of a most puerile and offensive character. The display of a dwarf attracted hordes of gaping idlers, who poured into the yawning pockets of a showman a stream of wealth, one tithe of which would have redeemed an honourable English artist from wretchedness and death. It is terrible to think

that, in the midst of the London season, in the heart of the greatest city, and under the eyes of the wealthiest people in the world, such should have been his lot."

"And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." —*Eccles.* ii. 10, 11.

THE MAN OF LITERATURE.

THE MAN OF LITERATURE.

CLOSELY allied with the pleasures of art are those of Literature, and in these perhaps we might, if anywhere, have expected to find an exemption from that law which has stamped on every unsanctified enjoyment the mark of vanity and vexation of spirit. But even here has that law been found in operation; and, amidst the mass of persons who have been gifted with great literary powers, it would be easy to adduce illustrations of the solemn moral which it has been the object of these pages to inculcate. "If to know wisdom," says a popular living

writer,* "were to practise it; if fame brought true dignity and peace of mind; if happiness consisted in surrounding the imagination with ideal beauty, a literary life would be the most enviable which the lot of this world affords. But the truth is far otherwise. Look at the biography of authors! Except the Newgate Calendar, it is the most sickening chapter in the history of man." As one of the most striking instances of the Mirage of literature in modern times—as a convincing evidence of the inefficacy of the highest genius to secure permanent happiness to its possessor—we select, as our next type, SIR WALTER SCOTT, or, *The Man of Literature.*

All influences which could promise happiness or success were crowded around this remarkable man. His professional pursuits furnished him with ample leisure and an income bordering on affluence. His natural

* Thomas Carlyle.

disposition, which was singularly amiable and generous, and accompanied by a chivalrous sense of honour, procured him the attachment of numerous friends. He enjoyed, too, in a remarkable degree, the sweets of a happy home. Thus, on grounds entirely independent of his literary powers, he was in possession of many of the elements of worldly comfort. In addition, however, to the blessings we have enumerated, he was gifted with a genius of the highest order. Much as the Christian must deplore the misapplication, in many respects, of that genius, he must acknowledge the appropriateness of the eulogium :

> "Brother of Homer, and of him
> Who struck the lyre by Avon's stream,
> Time shall through many a cycle be
> Ere he shall see a fourth like thee."

Never, perhaps, in any period of the world's history, did literary talent receive a homage so universal as that of Scott. His reputation

was coextensive, not only with the English language, but with the boundaries of civilization. It has been the lot of many meritorious authors to be unable to procure a profitable return for their writings. In one year, however, Scott's productions yielded him the enormous revenue of 15,000*l.* Other writers have been condemned to wait a lifetime before they saw their works approved; but Scott's sprang into popularity the first day they issued from the press, and procured their author an admiration that was almost idolatrous. The king conferred on him a baronetcy, accompanying that dignity with special marks of royal favour. When he travelled abroad, his appearance created an enthusiasm, and attracted a crowd of spectators, more like that which attends the passage of a monarch than the movements of a private individual. "If his carriage," says his biographer, describing Scott's visit to Ireland, "was recognised, the street was sure to

be crowded before he came out again, so as to make his departure as slow as a procession. When he entered a street, the watchword was passed down like lightning on both sides, and the shopkeepers and their wives stood bowing all the way down; while the mob and boys huzzaed as at the chariot-wheels of a conqueror."

All the good things, as they are termed, of this life were in Scott's possession. His mansion at Abbotsford realized the highest conceptions of a poetical imagination. "It seems," says one who visited, "like a poem in stone." "This house," said another distinguished writer, "is like places that we dream about." The company which crowded around the man of genius was no less wonderful. The highest nobleman felt honoured in being allowed to take a place at his board, around which were collected from every part of the kingdom persons eminent in the various walks of life. Each day produced some novelty. Now a

traveller recounted the wonders he had witnessed in foreign lands. Now a philosopher, like Sir Humphry Davy, detailed recent discoveries in science. Now a poet, or a painter, gave animation to the conversation by his genius. All sources of intellectual enjoyment were crowded together. It was worldly pleasure in its most concentrated form; and well might one of the visitors exclaim, "Surely Sir Walter Scott is, or ought to be, a happy man." And yet all this was but the Mirage. Feelingly does one, who was a witness of the pleasures of this man of genius in his palmiest days, exclaim, "Death has laid a heavy hand on that happy circle. Bright eyes long since closed in dust, gay voices for ever silenced, seem to haunt me as I write." A shock of commercial adversity ruined Sir Walter, and dispersed for ever the brilliant assemblies which had gathered round his board. The death of one who was dearest to him followed close upon this blow. What

consolation could literature then afford him in the hour of trial? Let Sir Walter's own touching words reply: "When I think," he writes, at a time when leaving Abbotsford apparently for ever; "when I think what this place now is, with what it has been not long ago, I think my heart will break. Lonely, aged, deprived of all my family, I am an impoverished and embarrassed man." At another time he writes, "Death has closed the dark avenue of love and friendship. I look at them as through the grated door of a burial-place, filled with monuments of those who once were dear to me, and with no other wish than that it may open for me at no distant period." Not long after, he writes in the strain, "Some new object of complaint comes every moment. Sicknesses come thicker and thicker; friends are fewer and fewer. The recollection of youth, health, and powers of activity, neither improved nor enjoyed, is a poor strain of comfort. The best

is, the long halt will arrive at length, and close all." Such was the confession of one who had drunk so largely of the world's cup of enjoyment. Oh, how emphatically does it warn those whose hearts are still set upon similar vanities!

The closing scene at last came, and is not less touching than the preceding passages. A most honourable attempt to pay off his creditors had, by overtaxing his energies, brought on incurable disease. Sir Walter requested, we are told, to be wheeled to his desk. His daughter put his pen into his hand, but his fingers refused to do their office. Silent tears rolled down his cheeks. "Take me back to my own room," he said. "There is no rest for Sir Walter but in his grave." A few days afterwards he died. In such gloomy clouds did the sun of the man of literature set. Otway died of starvation; Voltaire, in the height of his literary glory, wished that he had never been born: but none of these instances pro-

claim so touchingly as the career of Sir Walter Scott, that the highest genius, when not sanctified by being devoted to the glory of God, is, in its results, illusive as the Mirage.

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."—*Isaiah* xl. 6-8.

THE POET.

THE POET.

AMIDST other intellectual pursuits in which happiness has been sought, the career of the Poet may be next adverted to. His delights lie in the cultivation of a creative imagination, and in the enjoyment of those pleasures which can only be tasted by a mind of a refined order and delicate structure. When the poet's gifts have been devoted to the glory of God, they have proved to be eminently profitable and delightful. When cultivated in an irreligious and worldly spirit, however, experience has shown, by more than one painful instance, that a highly gifted bard may be a miserable man.

The life of Savage, the friend of Johnson, will be familiar to the student of English literature. The course of Chatterton is not less mournful. Full of youthful promise, he repaired to London, to commence, as he expected, a successful literary career. "What a glorious prospect awaits me!" he wrote on his arrival; yet within a few months he was buried as a common pauper from Shoe Lane workhouse. Equally sad associations are connected with the poet Burns. "Save me from the horrors of a jail," were almost his last words. "It will be some time," he wrote in his final illness, "before I tune my lyre again. I have of late only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. Pale, emaciated, and feeble, you would not know me if you saw me; and my spirits fled—fled!" In the biography of the poet Campbell, who had in early youth

sung "The Pleasures of Hope," a touching instance occurs of the emptiness of poetic fame. In the evening of life, the poet thus spoke to a circle of friends: "I am alone in the world. My wife and the child of my hopes are dead. My only surviving child is consigned to a living tomb" (he was the inmate of a lunatic asylum). "My old friends, brothers, and sisters are dead—all but one, and she too is dying. My last hopes are blighted. As for fame, it is a bubble that must soon burst. Earned for others, shared with others, it was sweet; but, at my age, to my own solitary experience it is bitter. Left in my chamber alone with myself, is it wonderful my philosophy at times takes fright; that I rush into company; resort to that which blunts but heals no pang; and then, sick of the world, and dissatisfied with myself, shrink back into solitude?"

As a far more striking instance, however, of the vanity of poetical genius and the empti-

ness of mere worldly fame, when ennobled by no divine aim or purpose, we select, as our type, LORD BYRON, or, *The Poet.*

Upon this remarkable man were heaped many of those gifts, of nature and of fortune, which are, by the world, so highly prized. He was by birth noble, tracing his descent from a line of ancestors which stretched back to a remote period of English history. Although not wealthy, he was left in possession of an income which, to a well-regulated mind, would have secured independence. His manners, when he wished to please, are stated to have been singularly winning and attractive. His smile disarmed opposition, and invited friendship. His external appearance harmonized with the order of his mind. He not only was, but *looked* the poet. The pencil of the artist and the chisel of the sculptor were alike employed to delineate his countenance as a model of classic

BYRON

grace. The talents intrusted to his stewardship were great: how melancholy, in surveying his short career, to observe their misapplication! And how different would have been the result, had they been guided by the wisdom that is from above, instead of that which "is earthly, sensual, devilish!"

His poetical genius was of a high class, capable of describing external nature, and the play of human passions, in a manner which stirred the deepest emotions of the heart. Byron early felt within himself aspirations after literary eminence. When a mere youth, he wrote—

> "The desire in my bosom for fame
> Bids me live but to hope for posterity's praise:
> Could I soar with the phœnix, on ashes of flame,
> With it I would wish to expire in the blaze."

These desires were speedily gratified. After a passing disappointment, caused by the failure of some minor poetical effusions, he published his first great poem. "The effect

of it," says a writer, "was electric. His fame had not to wait for any of the ordinary gradations, but seemed to spring up, like the palace of a fairy tale, in a single night." His work became the theme of every tongue. At his door many of the leading men of the day presented themselves. From morning till night the most flattering testimonies of success crowded his table. "He found himself," says Mr. Macaulay, "on the highest pinnacle of literary fame. There is scarcely an instance in history of so sudden a rise to so dizzy an eminence. Everything that could stimulate, everything that could gratify the strongest propensities of our nature, were at once offered to him : the gaze of a hundred drawing-rooms, the acclamations of the whole nation, and the applause of applauded men." "In place of the desert," continues his biographer, "which London had been to him a few weeks before, he not only saw the whole splendid interior of high life thrown open to

him, but found himself the most distinguished object among its illustrious crowds." A short time before the publication of his poem, Byron had taken his seat amidst the hereditary legislators of his country. With genius, with popularity, and with rank, how brilliant the prospect which now lay before him! Yet it proved but the deception of the Mirage.

In that with which, above all other points, true happiness is so essentially connected—religious principle—his mind was singularly deficient: it had been darkened by scepticism. When a youth, some passing religious convictions appear to have agitated him; for he wrote at that season a poem containing the following lines:—

> "Father of light, on Thee I call;
> Thou seest my soul is dark within;
> Thou, who canst mark the sparrow's fall,
> Avert from me the death of sin."

If spiritual anxiety did for a moment cross his mind, it was soon obliterated by the irre-

gularity of his moral conduct. The memorials of his early years are full of those records of wasted seasons of usefulness and squandered talents which lay up such a store of reproach for after-life. "The average hour of rising," says one of his companions at Newstead Abbey, "was one o'clock. It was two before breakfast was concluded." Frivolous amusements consumed the remaining hours, until the company, at seven, sat down to an entertainment, which was prolonged till two or three in the morning. The finest wines were abundantly supplied; a cup, fashioned out of a human skull, forming an unhallowed chalice out of which the guests were occasionally expected to drink. The result of this life was such as might have been anticipated—inward dissatisfaction. To use the poet's own language—

"He felt the fulness of satiety,"

and he quitted his native shores for foreign travel, in the hope of supplying his weary

spirit with fresh excitement; but all in vain. Though he carried with him a genius deeply imbued with poetical power, he returned to England chagrined and sick at heart. When his travels were concluded, he thus wrote :— "Embarrassed in my private affairs, indifferent to public; solitary, and without the wish to be social; I am returning home without a hope, and almost without a desire."

Fresh literary triumphs failed to secure the happiness which he sought; nor was he more successful in finding it in a marriage which he soon afterwards contracted. He saw, to use his own language, his household gods shivered around him. Nine executions for debt entered his dwelling within a twelvemonth, and, at the end of that period, a separation ensued between his wife and himself. Retiring abroad, he plunged afresh in streams of sinful pleasure. His life became a miserable animal existence—the source of wretchedness to himself. He was, indeed, sick of it. "If

I were to live over again," he writes, "I do not know what I would change in my life, except not to have lived at all." Similar sentiments were expressed in his poetry :—

> "Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
> Count o'er the days from anguish free ;
> And know, what ever thou hast been,
> 'Tis something better not to be."

The whole of his poetry, indeed, continued to bear the impress of his morbid spirit. "Never had any writer," says a critic, "so vast a command of the whole eloquence of scorn, misanthropy, and despair. That Marah was never dry. No heart could sweeten, no draughts exhaust, its perennial waters of bitterness. From maniac laughter to piercing lamentation, there was not a single note of human anguish of which he was not master. He always described himself as a man whose capacity for happiness was gone, and could not be restored." Restless and dissatisfied, he pursued new objects, and betook himself to a visionary

scheme for the political regeneration of Greece —a country which had attracted his poetical sympathies. Fresh disappointments awaited him in this scene of action, and his heart's aspirations after enjoyment were again blasted. On the last birthday which he was destined to see, he thus described, in touching lines, his own lonely and miserable condition :—

"My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.

The fire that in my bosom plays
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze,
A funeral pile."

The life of the poet was now, however, drawing to a close. Shortly after composing these verses he was arrested by the hand of disease, and his illness terminated fatally. The death-bed of this highly-gifted man was a painful spectacle. "I had never before felt," says an eye-witness of it, "as I felt that evening.

There was the gifted Lord Byron—who had been the object of universal attention, who had even as a youth been intoxicated with the idolatry of men—gradually expiring, and almost forsaken, without even the consolation of breathing out his last sigh in the arms of some dear friend. His habitation was weather-tight; but that was all the comfort his deplorable room afforded him." No gleam of joy, of peace, or hope, rose upon that melancholy scene; no prayer for forgiveness ascended. The Divine Redeemer was but once mentioned, and then only in an exclamation wrung forth by pain. The dying poet murmured some broken and inarticulate sentences, in which occurred the names of his wife and child, and falling into a troubled slumber, he soon afterwards died:

> "His high aims abandoned—his good acts undone—
> Aweary of all that is under the sun."

Such was the termination of the Poet's career. The world and the glory thereof had

been his; but, unsanctified and unblessed by God, all his rich intellectual enjoyments had proved illusive as the Mirage.

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."—*Eccles.* xi. 9.

THE

MAN OF WIT AND HUMOUR.

THE MAN OF WIT AND HUMOUR.

THE next illustration which we select of the Mirage of life, is the man of Wit and Humour. Here at least, it may be presumed, that the search after happiness will be successful. It may be thought that they who promote mirth so much in others, and who treat life as if it were a jest, have themselves found out the true secret of enjoyment. Very different, however, is the result. There is a mirth in the midst of which the heart is sad, and a laughter the end whereof is heaviness. Not that there is anything sinful in mirth; not that it is not a

quality which, when rightly directed, may be turned to useful purposes: but that when unsanctified, it is, as a source of happiness, a delusion and a Mirage. Cervantes, at a time when all Spain was laughing at the humorous flights of his pen, was overwhelmed with a deep cloud of melancholy. Molière, the first of French comic writers, carried into the domestic circle a sadness which the greatest worldly prosperity could never dispel. Samuel Foote, a noted wit of the last century, died of a broken heart. D'Israeli mentions, that one morning meeting, in a bookseller's shop, a squalid and wretched-looking man, the very picture of misery, he was astonished to learn that he was a person who was amusing the metropolis by his humorous effusions. The anecdote is well known of the physician recommending a man, who was pining under melancholy, to attend, as a means of cure, the performances of a noted comic actor, and of being informed that his patient was

the actor in question—himself wretched, while amusing others. Captain Morris, a witty writer of considerable reputation at the commencement of the present century, when aged, deserted, and well-nigh impoverished, described in the following lines the little satisfaction which the retrospect of his life of folly could afford him :—

"My friends of youth, manhood, and age,
At length are all laid in the ground ;
A unit I stand on life's stage,
With nothing but vacancy round.
I wander bewildered and lost,
Without impulse or interest in view ;
And all hope of my heart is, at most,
Soon to bid this cold desert adieu."

As one of the most striking examples, in modern times, of the unsatisfactory nature of a life of frivolity, we select, as our next illustration, THEODORE HOOK, or, *The Man of Wit and Humour.*

He was the son of a musical com-

poser of considerable eminence in his day. He was, by death, early deprived of the training of his mother, a circumstance to which much of the unhappiness of his future career may be attributed. His father, returning home one evening, was astonished at his son, then a mere child, producing two ballads, which, with appropriate music, he had himself composed : the one plaintive, the other humorous. The prognostics of future distinction thus afforded were verified by the event. At the age of sixteen, a time when other youths are just leaving school, he was, from his powers of dramatic composition, in the receipt of a considerable income, and enjoying great popularity. His name was blazoned as a youthful genius in the newspapers ; his portrait was taken, and he had free admission to the places of public amusement. Many a young man in the present day would have envied his position as containing all that was desirable ! Life lay

BUTTERWORTH & HEATH SC

before him like a smooth ocean; and, intoxicated by success, he launched his bark fearlessly upon it: Youth stood at the prow, Mirth trimmed the sails, Folly took the helm; while the pennon which streamed in the air bore the words, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes."

At this time, a taste for coarse practical joking had seized young men. To pull off knockers and bell-handles, to carry away tradesmen's signs, and to overturn the boxes of sleeping watchmen, were considered the marks of a generous and manly spirit. Hook plunged into these amusements, and kept a private museum containing abstracted bells, knockers, and signboards. We feel some scruple in making allusion to such disgraceful follies; but it is necessary, for our illustration, that, the gay as well as the grave side of the picture should be shown. On one occasion

Hook's friend pointed out to him, as an appropriate specimen of natural history for his museum, a new-gilt eagle of large dimensions, which had just been erected over a grocer's shop. A few weeks afterwards, the same friend happening to be dining with Hook, the latter, towards the close of the entertainment, ordered "the game to be served up." Immediately, to the astonishment of the visitor, the servant entered the room, staggering under the burden of a dish of unusual size. On uncovering it there was produced the identical eagle which Hook, as a practical joke, had contrived to carry off. Such were the contemptible frivolities in which the man of humour wasted his youthful prime.

Among other accomplishments for which he was distinguished, was a remarkable power of producing extempore poetry. At a dinner party he would, without premeditation, compose a verse on every person in the room, full of point and wit, and with true rhyme. Sheridan

the orator, who was present upon one of these occasions, declared that he could not have imagined such a talent possible, had he not witnessed the exhibition of it.

So confident was Hook in his powers of humour, that, passing, with a friend, a house in which a party was assembling for dinner, he undertook, although quite unacquainted with the owner of the house or any of the guests, to join them, and instructed his friend to call for him at ten o'clock. Knocking at the door accordingly, he gave his hat confidently to the servant, and was ushered up-stairs. Entering the drawing-room, he affected to have for the first time discovered his mistake, and poured out such sallies of wit, that, as he had anticipated, the host, although ignorant even of his name, pressed him to stay to dinner. When his friend Mr. Terry called, ignorant whether he should find him there or in the neighbouring watch-house, he was astonished, on being shown into the drawing-room,

to see the man of humour seated at the pianoforte, delivering some extempore poetry, which, upon perceiving the entrance of his friend, he wound up with the following stanza :—

"I'm very much pleased with your fare,
Your cellar's as good as your cook.
My friend's Mr. Terry the player,
And I'm Mr. Theodore Hook."

The fame of the man of wit reached even royalty itself. The Prince Regent was so fascinated with him, that he appointed him treasurer to the island of the Mauritius, with a salary of 2,000*l.* a year. He here gave himself up to every enjoyment. "This island," he wrote home to his friends, "is fairyland. The mildness of the air, the clearness of the atmosphere, the liveliness of the place itself, all combine to render it fascination. Every hour seems happier than the last." Here, then, was Hook at the pinnacle of his

glory. Rich, popular, witty, and full of friends, he had surely found the secret of happiness! No; he had only followed the Mirage.

Business and pleasure, in the worldly sense of the latter term, are rarely compatible. A deficiency of 12,000*l.* arising not from fraud but from gross carelessness, was found in the treasury. He was suddenly arrested in a ball-room, and sent home a prisoner for debt to England, stripped of all his honours, and penniless. Happy would it have been for him had this blow awakened him from his dream of folly; but, alas! as one delusion was dissipated, another took its place. By his pen he soon achieved literary eminence, and an income of 4,000*l.* a year. Seated at the tables of the great, he became again, from his wit and humour, the life of every party. His versatile genius sparkled more brilliantly than ever, and he was the admired of all admirers. In the midst of his gaiety, however, he had an

aching heart. From the brilliant saloon, he would retire to his lonely apartment; and there, with jaded spirits, sit down to write for his bread some work of humour, racking, as has been well observed, his imagination for mirth with anguish at his heart. "We may venture," says one who appears to have known him intimately; "we may venture to supply by way of specimen a sketch, by no means overcharged, of one of those restless life-exhausting days in which the seemingly iron energies of Hook were prematurely consumed. A late breakfast—his spirits jaded by the exertions of yesterday, and further depressed by some pecuniary difficulty—large arrears of literary toil to be made up—the meal sent away untasted—every power of his mind forced and strained for the next four or five hours upon the subject that happens to be in hand—then a rapid drive to town, and a visit first to one club, where, the centre of an ad-

miring circle, his intellectual faculties are again upon the stretch, and again aroused and sustained by artificial means—the same thing repeated at a second club—a ballot or a general meeting at a third—a chop in the committee room, and then a tumbler of brandy-and-water, or two ; and, we fear, the catalogue would not always close here. Off next to take his place at some lordly banquet, where the fire of wit is to be again stirred into a blaze, and fed by fresh supplies of potent stimulants. Lady A. has never heard one of his delightful extempores—the pianoforte is at hand—fresh and more vigorous efforts of fancy, memory, and application are called for—all the wondrous machinery of the brain taxed and strained to the very utmost—smiles and applause reward the exertion, and perhaps one more song is craved as a special favour. . . . He retires at last ; but not to rest—not to home. Half an hour at Crockford's is proposed by some gay

companion as they quit together. We need not continue the picture. The half-hour is quadrupled, and the excitement of the preceding part of the evening is as nothing to that which now ensues. By the time he reaches home the reaction is complete; and in a state of utter prostration, bodily and mental, he seeks his pillow, to run perhaps precisely a similar course on the morrow."

Such was the daily life of the man of wit and humour! Hook has left behind him a journal, some extracts from which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* a few years ago. It is a harrowing description of splendid misery —of the life of one who, while in the world's opinion full of enjoyment, was in truth thoroughly wretched. Let a few brief extracts suffice: "To-day I am forcing myself, against my inclination, to write. The old sickness and faintness of heart came over me, and I could not go out. No; it is only to

the grave that I must be carried. If my poor children were safe, I would not care. . . . Another year opens upon me with a vast load of debt, and many encumbrances. I am suffering under a constant depression of spirits, which no one who sees me in society ever dreams of."

The close was, however, approaching. One day, at a dinner party, all were struck with his ghastly paleness. Turning round to a mirror, he himself exclaimed, "Ah! I see how it is. I look just as I am—done up in mind, in body, and purse." Returning home, he took to his bed. A friend calling on him found him in an undress. "Here you see me," he said. "All my buckling, and padding, and washing dropped for ever; and I a grey-headed old man." A few days afterwards he died.

Such was the end of the man of wit and humour. His noble powers had all been

wasted in the service of the world. He had followed mirth and folly as his grand object in life. Oh, how emphatically had they proved to him—only the Mirage!

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness."—*Prov.* xiv. 12, 13.

THE MAN OF THE WORLD.

THE MAN OF THE WORLD.

THERE is another character resembling in many points those which we have previously sketched, but differing from them in some particular shades—we mean the Man of the World. He prides himself on his knowledge of life, on his acquaintance with its maxims, and on his thorough devotion to its pursuits. It is not our intention to draw this character at full length; but, as an illustration of our meaning, briefly bring before our readers the name of the celebrated LORD CHESTERFIELD, as a type of *The Man of the World.*

This nobleman emphatically deserved this title, so much so, that he has been well termed by some the high priest of the world's vanities. Born to rank, wealth, and talent, he enjoyed all the requisites which are commonly supposed to constitute happiness. He started in life with the determination of gaining the applause and favour of the world, making that the supreme object of his existence. Selfishness was the key-stone of his system. The maxim of a great statesman—Lord Somers—had been, "Aim at being useful, rather than at appearing to be so." Lord Chesterfield reversed the motto, and read it, "Aim at appearing to be, rather than at being, useful." To adapt himself to the humours and peculiarities of all he met; to study their passions and weaknesses, that he might play upon them for his own advantage; such were his principles of action. He aimed at being thought the most polite man in England, if not in Europe. "Hand the gentleman a

chair," were almost his dying words, when a friend entered his room during his last illness; thus showing the ruling passion strong in death. His popularity was very great. He attained a high position in the state. He possessed a large and magnificent mansion, which, even in the present day, commands admiration as a monument of his classic taste.*

* "In the magnificent mansion which he erected in Audley-street, you may still," says a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, "see his favourite apartments furnished and decorated as he left them; among the rest, what he boasted of as the finest room in London, (and perhaps, even now, it remains unsurpassed,) his spacious and beautiful library looking on the finest private garden in London. The walls are covered half-way up with rich and classical stores of literature; above the cases are, in close series, the portraits of eminent authors, French and English, with most of whom he had conversed. Over these, and immediately under the massive cornice, extend all round in foot-long capitals the Horatian lines—

'Nunc veterum libris, nunc somno et inertibus horis
Ducere solicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ.'

'Let us drown in sweet oblivion the anxious cares of life—by alternate study, slumber, or grateful indolence."

He had a mind cultivated and enriched with stores of learning and general information. The prize, therefore, for which he started in life was gained; but, unsanctified and unblessed by God, his success proved wormwood to the taste, and illusive as the Mirage. The word of God had said, "Love not the world;" but Lord Chesterfield had in effect declared, "The world I will love." Let his own words, penned in the evening of life, tell what he had found the result of his decision to be.

"I have run," says he, "the silly rounds of business and of pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is in truth very low; whereas those who have not experienced them always overrate them. They only see the gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I

have been behind the scenes, and have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine. I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decorations, to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. I look back on all that is passed as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly produces, and I have no wish to repeat the nauseous dose. I have been as wicked and as vain as Solomon; but am now at last able to feel and attest the truth of his reflection, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Shall I tell you that I bear this situation with resignation and constancy? No; I bear it because I must, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that it has become my enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the rest of life's journey." Such was the confession of the man of the

world. Selfishness had been the mainspring of his conduct. The result had been, dissatisfaction of spirit, the illusion of the Mirage.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."—1 *John* ii. 15-17.

THE BEAUTY.

THE BEAUTY.

THESE pages may meet the eye of some who are exulting in all the gladness of youthful Beauty. To such we address a few words of warning against confiding in this most alluring yet most illusive Mirage. Yes! even beauty, so much prized, has often proved only a mockery and a snare; and, when unaccompanied by the fear of God, been a source of sorrow to its possessors.

What suggestions illustrative of the truth of this remark are called forth by the name of Mary, Queen of Scots! If ever the possession of beauty and female charms could

have guaranteed happiness, she might with justice have expected it. "All contemporary authors," says Robertson the historian, "agree in ascribing to Mary the utmost beauty of countenance and elegance of shape of which the human form is capable. No one ever beheld her without admiration." Yet this very beauty proved one of the causes of her ruin. "Ah! what a life were this, gay ladies, could it only last for ever!" said the Scottish reformer Knox, when he visited her court and glanced at its brilliant circle. Truly was this warning given. Behind the deceptive scene was lurking the scaffold, and an ignominious death. A few years more saw the once young and beautiful queen bending beneath the executioner's axe, and closing her career in shame and sorrow.

The life of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, is another illustration of the Mirage of beauty. Distinguished by her personal charms, she ascended, when very young, the

throne of one of the most powerful countries in Europe, and gave herself up to a life of worldly enjoyment. All that art and luxury could contribute to make life happy were hers. Yet, in the end, it proved baseless as the Mirage. Time rolled on, and saw the once youthful and romantic queen, with locks turned prematurely gray by sorrow, conducted by a yelling mob to the guillotine.

Josephine, the wife of Napoleon, was also distinguished for her personal charms, and, her devotion to the pleasures of the world. She, too, found them all delusive; saw her regal power dissolve like a vision, and died of a broken heart.

Descending from the circle of royalty, we find a similar lesson conveyed in recent times in the career of the celebrated LADY HAMILTON, or, *The Beauty*.

The name of this woman will be familiar to all who have read the Life of Lord Nelson.

His unhappy connection with her casts a deep shade on his character, and was the cause of the chief blot which rests upon his fame, in the execution of Caraccioli at Naples. Lady Hamilton was distinguished above almost every woman of her age for personal beauty. A poetical writer, when sketching her character, thus speaks :—

"I've seen thy bust in many lands:
I've seen the stranger pause with lifted hands.
In deep mute admiration—while his eye
Dwelt sparkling on its peerless symmetry.
I've seen the poet's, painter's, sculptor's gaze
Speak with rapt glance the eloquence of praise." *

Her accomplishments were scarcely inferior to her beauty. "She was skilled," says her biographer, "in music and painting. She had exquisite taste, and her features could express every emotion by turn." By her fascinating manners, she soon acquired a

* A similar impression was made on the writer when looking at an original portrait by Romney of Lady Hamilton in her youthful days. From whatever part of the room it was approached, the picture fixed and fascinated the eye.

BUTTERWORTH & HEATH SC.

great influence over Nelson, and her friendship was eagerly sought by crowds of aspirants for court favour. The letters of Lord Nelson, recently published, contain several addressed to her by persons in the upper classes of society, who in the hour of prosperity fawned upon her, and were ready to do her abject homage. These letters commence, "My dear Lady Hamilton;" "My esteemed Lady Hamilton." The world lay at her feet, and nothing seemed to forebode that what she was following was but as the Mirage. The only occasion on which Beckford of Fonthill threw open his splendid mansion to company was when Lady Hamilton, along with Lord Nelson, visited it. All that the wealth of the princely owner could furnish was provided to give splendour to the scene. The grounds were illuminated by lamps and torches, and the interior of the apartments was a blaze of jewellery and gold and silver. "Spiced wine," says the *Gentle-*

man's Magazine of the day, "and confectionery in golden baskets, were handed round to the company." A numerous party was assembled, and Lady Hamilton shone the envy of them all. Attired in a rich costume, she entered with a golden urn in her hands, and recited some verses, which the company was far too politic not rapturously to applaud, spoken as they were by one who had such influence over the hero of the hour. No one was there to tell her that all this was but deception; that sin surely carried its own punishment with it, and the pleasures she was pursuing were merely the Mirage. And yet it was even so.

Thirteen years after the banquet at Fonthill had taken place, a lady, buying some meat for her dog at a butcher's stall in Calais, was thus accosted by the butcher's wife: "Ah, madam! you seem a benevolent lady; and upstairs there is a poor Englishwoman, who would be glad of the smallest piece of meat which you are buying for your

dog." Who was the grateful recipient of such humble alms? Alas! Lady Hamilton, the beauty! After the death of Lord Nelson, deserted by those who fawned upon her in prosperity, she gradually became impoverished, and died in a wretched lodging in Calais. Her property consisted only of a few pawnbroker's duplicates. Her body was put into a common deal box, without any inscription. A pall was made, by the hand of charity, out of an old silk gown belonging to the deceased, stitched upon a white curtain; and, over the praised of statesmen, warriors, poets, and artists, the funeral service was read by an Irish officer on half-pay. "Her remains lie buried," says Rae Wilson, the traveller, "in the ditch of Calais." By others, the spot of her interment is said now to be used as a common wood-yard; nothing indicating where her ashes repose. Such was the end of the beauty. How emphatically had her career been only the Mirage!

If any confirmation were needed of the melancholy truth conveyed in the above lesson, it would be found in the life of the well-known Lady Hester Stanhope. Few women entered life with greater opportunities of enjoying it than she did; and seldom was an elevation so dazzling as hers. The niece of Mr. Pitt, the favourite minister of George III., she was flattered by royalty, and made a theme for the illustration of poetry, painting, and sculpture. Sated, however, with worldly greatness, she retired to the solitudes of the East, and there attempted to establish her reputation as Queen of the Desert. Her lofty visions all faded, however; and in the evening of life, forsaken by her friends and burdened with pecuniary difficulties,* the once

* Dr. Thomson, who performed the funeral service over the remains of Lady Stanhope, wrote:—"What a death! Without a European attendant, without a friend, male or female—alone on the top of this bleak mountain, her lamp of life grew dimmer and more dim, until it went quite out in hopeless, rayless night. Such was the end of the once gay and brilliant niece of Pitt,

youthful beauty thus confessed how she had proved the vanity of life :—"She began," says her biographer, "to cry and to wring her hands, presenting a most melancholy picture of despair. She then spoke thus: 'Look on me; what a lesson I am against vanity! Look at this arm, all skin and bone—so thin that you may see through it. It was once, without exaggeration, so rounded that you could not pinch the skin up. My neck was once so fair, that a pearl necklace scarcely showed on it; and men—men who were no fools, but sensible men—would say to me: You have a neck of which you may really be proud. You are one of nature's favourites, and may be excused for admiring that beautiful skin. What would they say if they could behold me now; with my teeth all gone, and

presiding in the saloons of the master spirit of Europe, and familiar with the intrigues of kings and cabinets. Alas! she must have drained to the dregs many a bitter cup. Let those who are tempted to revolt against society, and war with nature, God, and man, sit on the fragments of this broken tomb."

long lines on my face?'. . . . In this mournful strain," adds her biographer, "she went on. Everything around her presented so affecting a picture, that, unable to restrain my emotions, I burst into tears." Such were the confessions of a beauty. How completely had she found all her youthful charms illusive as the Mirage!

"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."—*Prov.* xxxi. 30.

THE MONARCH.

THE MONARCH.

THE cares and annoyances incidental to power and elevated rank have proved a frequent theme of declamation to the moralist and the poet; and, as appropriately concluding our sketches of the Mirage of Life, we propose to select our next illustration from the highest point of human greatness—the throne of the Monarch. As to no individual is given in a higher degree the capacity of promoting human happiness, and advancing the Divine glory, so nowhere do we find more thrilling lessons than in the career of the monarch, as to the vanity and worthlessness

of the world, when the heart has been devoted to its worship. Charles the Fifth, after a life spent in military exploits, and the active and energetic prosecution of ambitious projects, resigned, as is well known, his crown, sated with its enjoyment. The Empress Catherine of Russia endeavoured to find happiness in gratifying, to the utmost, expensive tastes, and heaping up a costly collection of works of art. She was so pressed, however, we are informed, by the torments of a guilty conscience, as to be at times compelled to leave her chamber at night, and rush from her palace, scourged by the lashes of her inward tormentor. Beckford of Fonthill, when in Portugal, at the close of the last century, met with a similar spectacle of misery in the circles of royalty, during his visit to the palace of the queen-dowager of that country. Her conscience, it is supposed, was burdened with some unrepented guilt. She imagined, by night and

by day, that she beheld her father a mass of calcined cinder enveloped in flame and fastened to a pedestal of molten iron. At the very time that Beckford was listening to the narrative of her sufferings, in an adjoining apartment, the most agonizing shrieks, such as he had hardly conceived possible to be uttered, rang through the palace, inflicting upon the visitor a sensation of horror which he had never experienced before. These were the cries of the unhappy queen, surrounded by everything that could minister to her comfort, and yet profoundly miserable. Many other examples might be produced, illustrative of the truth that often "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." But as one of the most striking instances, in modern or in ancient times, of the unsatisfactory career of a king, when devoid of Christian principle, we select, as appropriately concluding these sketches, the life of NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, or, *The Monarch.*

This extraordinary man was born at Corsica in the year 1769. Although signs of genius were noticed in him when a boy, yet none could have anticipated that the quiet and studious youth was afterwards to play so remarkable a part on the stage of life. Having chosen the military profession, he remained for some years in the ranks of the army, noticed only as an attentive and intelligent officer. The great outburst of the first French Revolution, however, soon took place, and circumstances arose which called into action his wonderful powers. Toulon witnessed the first marked display of his great military talents.

Stepping from one post to another, he found himself ere long, from being an obscure officer, appointed to the command of the army of Italy. Had the spectacle been such as could have awakened the respect of our moral faculties, his position at this time would have deserved admiration. Young and enterprising, he displayed qualities

of ardour, energy, and perseverance worthy of a better cause. Victory followed victory. The skill of the oldest and most experienced generals failed when brought into contact with him, and he was soon placed at the head of an army flushed with success, and became the master of a large country, with potentates anxiously suing for peace. This was but the commencement of his onward career. Returning home, he was consumed with a passion for military glory, and, with a bold but unscrupulous genius, he designed his expedition to Egypt. Here, too, success accompanied him. The decayed energies of the country received an impulse from his hands; and Egypt, long sunk under oppression, was made, under his rule, to bear some resemblance to the bustling and prosperous land which it had been in the days of the Pharaohs. Egypt served but as the vaulting-board from which he sprang, under circumstances that would have crushed a less determined spirit,

to the post of supreme rule. He was made first consul of France. Having gained this power, he was not slow to augment it. The fortunes of the country, which had long declined, began, under his hand, to rally. Even the physical barriers imposed by nature did not present obstacles too great for his perseverance to overcome. The Alps themselves were scaled by him. The disasters and dangers which had threatened France were turned into victories. The crown, for which he had so long panted, was at last placed upon his brow. The pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church travelled to Paris to preside at the ceremony of his coronation; and art lent all its aid to make the spectacle gorgeous.

Even this elevation, however, did not mark the zenith of Napoleon's power. It seemed to soar afresh from those points at which other minds would have paused for repose. In a series of battles he defeated every army which opposed him. No weapon formed

against him seemed to prosper. Kingdoms were broken up by him, and ancient boundaries altered at his pleasure. As he grew in power, however, he grew also in pride. His levees and ante-rooms were crowded, not only with courtiers, but with princes and kings, longing for his smiles or a glance of approbation. Never, perhaps, had mortal risen before to such a point of elevation. With the majority of the countries of Europe tributary to him, he seemed above the reach of reverses. But, unfounded in equity, based on unrighteousness, even this mighty empire was to pass away like the Mirage.

Blinded by pride, he was tempted to invade Russia. The result is well known. Amidst the snows of that vast empire, he saw entombed an army surpassing in magnitude any which had ever been led forth by a conqueror in modern times. His power was sapped by this disaster. The combined monarchs of Europe rose, in the hope of de-

liverance from the oppression which had so long weighed them down. One by one, he saw the fragments of his authority pass away. Like a desperate gambler, he risked his all upon the die, and found himself at last a captive on the barren rock of St. Helena.

And now was to be exemplified, the vanity of worldly ambition. The mighty monarch's train was reduced to a few attendants, and his territory to a plot of garden ground. He, who had made so many widows and orphans, was himself deprived of his wife and son. The schemes to which his active mind turned for recreation proved abortive. "Let us live on the past," he exclaimed. But the retrospect exhibited only a course of selfish aggrandizement. He sickened, and pined for death. "Why," he would ask, "did the cannon balls spare me to die in this manner? I am no longer the Great Napoleon." "How fallen I am!" he would at other times exclaim,—"I, whose activity was

boundless, whose mind never slumbered, am plunged in lethargic stupor, and must make an effort even to raise my eyelids. I sometimes dictated upon different subjects to four or five secretaries, who wrote as fast as words could be uttered; but then I was Napoleon. Now I am no longer anything. My strength, my faculties forsake me. I do not live; I merely exist."

At other times his reflections took a religious turn: "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself, founded empires upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love, and at this hour millions of men would die for Him. I die before my time, and my body will be given back to the earth to become food for the worms. Such is the fate which so soon awaits him who has been called the Great Napoleon. What an abyss between my deep misery and the eternal kingdom of Christ, which is proclaimed, loved, and adored, and which is extending over the whole earth!"

With the failure of his health his spirits also drooped. Some fishes in a pond in his garden had attracted his notice; a deleterious substance happened to mix with the water; they sickened and died. "Everything that I love," says Napoleon; "everything that belongs to *me*, is stricken. Heaven and mankind unite to afflict me." Fits of long silence and profound melancholy were now frequent. His health became weaker and weaker, his weariness of life more apparent; but at length the final scene in his eventful course drew nigh. His disorder reached its height. In his last hours, his thoughts mingled with the battle strife: "Steingell, Dessaix, Masséna," he exclaimed, in the midst of his wanderings of mind, "victory is declaring itself. Run! hasten! press the charge! they are ours." Soon afterwards he died. A narrow grave, overhung by a weeping willow, long marked the spot where the remains of the mighty conqueror reposed.

Such was Napoleon Bonaparte; the possessor of talents of the highest order, of power the most unbounded, of opportunities of usefulness the most varied. Every element of human happiness had been within his reach; but all, without the Divine blessing, had proved unsubstantial as the Mirage.

"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—*Matt.* xvi. 26.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In the preceding pages have been given the outlines of the career of various individuals, who, drinking deeply of the world's enjoyments, yet found in the end that all which they had followed had been but vanity and vexation of spirit. The list of examples furnished might have been enlarged by others belonging to a more remote period; but it has been our desire to sustain the interest of the subject by selecting the illustrations from modern times.

By way of brief addition, however, to the characters previously delineated, we may point, as *The Successful Lawyer*, to Lord Keeper North, panting for years to grasp the great

seal of England, but confessing, when he had actually gained the object of pursuit, that he scarcely enjoyed one minute of ease or peace. "The king," says his biographer, describing his appointment, "lifted up the purse containing the seal, and putting it into his hands, said, 'Here, my lord, take it. You will find it heavy.' Thus his majesty acted the prophet as well as the king; for, shortly before his lordship's death, he declared, that since he had had the seal he had not enjoyed an easy or contented minute." As *The Scholar*, GROTIUS will occur to recollection, envying on his deathbed a poor but pious peasant, who had devoted much of his time to prayer and the perusal of the Scriptures, while he himself, as he confessed, had lost a lifetime in laborious trifling. As *The Philosopher*, BACON may be appropriately pointed to. He explored all the heights, and sounded all the depths of philosophy, yet closed his days in dishonour, a chagrined and disappointed man. As *The*

Man of Enterprise, how touching it is to find COLUMBUS, discovering a new world, yet dying of the sickness of hope deferred, and declaring that he could not have served the monarch who neglected him more faithfully had it been to obtain paradise. Turning to the pages of Scripture, we find SOLOMON surpassing in wisdom and glory all the princes of the earth, and yet confessing in the end, that, with the exception of the fear of God and keeping his commandments, all else was vanity and vexation of spirit.* "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with

* "It may be vanity to pursue pleasure and gratify appetite, to hunt after renown. It may be vanity to buy fine houses, preserve pheasants, plant trees, acquire an estate, with the hills from the lighthouse to Weybourne for a boundary; but it is not vanity, it is excellent good sense, to serve with all the heart, and soul, and might, and main, the Master and Creator of these heavens. It is not vanity to conquer evil passions, and stifle unholy repinings; it is not vanity to be patient, submissive, and gentle and cheerful; and in seasons of trial and privation to spread around a loving and holy influence, so that the sufferer becomes the teacher and the comforter."—*Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton.*

mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? . . . . I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my

heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."*

What lesson, then, are we to draw from these solemn attestations of the vanity of human pursuits, and the Mirage of Life? That happiness is nowhere to be found? No! Such a conclusion would be at variance with experience, and a libel on the bounty of that great Being who has given us all things richly to enjoy, and who has multiplied with a lavish hand the materials of pleasure for the gratification of his creatures. Is this then the lesson taught,—that wealth, art, fame, eloquence, power, were in themselves sinful? No: it is possible to be a man of wealth, and yet a John Thornton; a hero, and yet a Gardiner or a Havelock; an orator, and yet a Jeremy

* Eccles. ii. 1-11.

Taylor or a Robert Hall; a man of wit, and yet a Wilberforce; an artist, and yet a Bacon the sculptor; a beauty, and yet to have personal charms eclipsed by the beauty of holiness. The truth to be drawn from the examples cited is, not that there is no happiness in life, but that in a life unsanctified by religion no real, or at least no permanent bliss is to be found. It is no want of charity to assert, that the individuals whose characters we have drawn sought their chief enjoyment in the world. In the end, it proved to them a broken cistern which could hold no water. Such ever has been, and ever must be, the result of all attempts to find pleasure in the creature apart from the Creator. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," was the great law originally engraven by the Almighty on the heart of a man; and while it is neglected, all expectations of solid or abiding enjoyment

are a chimera and a delusion. The faculties of the soul, in their fallen condition, have lost their original centre, and are restless and dissatisfied, each seeking its own selfish gratification. It is only when the heart, under the drawing of the Holy Spirit, returns to God in the way He has pointed out, through the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, by a true faith and cordial acceptance of him as the Saviour of sinners, that it finds its rest. All the powers of the soul become then obedient to their lawful Head, and peace and harmony enter where before were confusion and disorder.

Nor let it be supposed that the reverses and disappointments, which we have described as incidental to human life, are peculiar to men of elevated station or distinguished genius. By fixing the glass at a lower range, we should doubtless have been enabled to present numerous instances of the Mirage of Life in humbler classes of society, though not possessing interest enough to form the subject

of detailed sketches. In almost every grade of society, how different are the closing from the opening scenes of life! The youth, who has started in the race for wealth, finds himself too often a disappointed old man, struggling with embarrassments and misfortune. He who had looked forward to length of days, pines perhaps in sickness, or is cut off in his prime. Another, who had pictured an ideal paradise of domestic enjoyment, sees the object of his affections laid in the grave, and the children of early promise cut off by disease, or blasting by misconduct the fond hopes which parental love had entertained. Multitudes will join, from painful experience, in the following sad retrospect of life :—

"The shade of youthful hope was there
That lingered long and latest died;
Ambition all dissolved in air
With phantom honours by its side.

What empty shadows glimmer nigh?
They once were friendship, truth, and love.
Ah! die to thought! to memory die!
Since to my heart ye lifeless prove."

When we turn, however, to the pages of Christian biography, do we find any instances of individuals who had truly devoted themselves to the service of God, complaining that they had found *that* the Mirage? No: God is the fountain of living water, at which man may supply all his wants, while still the supply is inexhausted, because inexhaustible. His gospel meets the cravings of man's heart for happiness. Faith in the great atoning sacrifice of Christ gives peace to the troubled conscience; the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit restore health and happiness to the soul which they enter; the service of Christ calls into vigorous and harmonious action all the mental powers; while trust in God's providence, if it does not give exemption from the vicissitudes to which life is subject, sanctifies them and turns them into a source of blessing. Let the honoured lives of Wilberforce, Simeon, and many other pious men of modern times,

be appealed to. See them drawing nigh to their latter end full of years and of honours, and with a hope bright with immortality. See Payson on his death-bed acknowledging after a life devoted to the service of God, that he swam in a sea of glory, and was filled, in the prospect of eternity, with a joy beyond the power of utterance.

By these bright examples on the one hand, and by the instances of worldly failure already adduced on the other, we would affectionately entreat our reader solemnly to ask himself what is his great object in life, and to take heed that he is not chasing the Mirage. The objects which he is following may be of a less dignified nature than those pursued by the characters we have sketched; but if unsanctified, if pursued without reference to the glory of God, sooner or later, in eternity if not in time, they will be found to have been but vanity and vexation of spirit.

To the young do we more especially appeal.

Before their eyes the Mirage is apt to expand in all its false and treacherous hues. Oh, let them be persuaded now, ere it is too late, to cease from its vain pursuit; to detect the hollowness of the world's attractions, and to take up the light and easy yoke of Christ. Repent, and believe the gospel. Flee, while it is yet time, to the Saviour. Seek in earnest prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to create within you a new and a contrite heart, and to enable you to cleave to Christ, with full purpose to devote yourselves to his service, henceforth leading a new life, and following the commandments of God.

To any weary-hearted wanderer who has long chased the Mirage, we would tender the Saviour's gracious invitation: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy

and My burden is light." Justified through faith in the Son of God, and sanctified by his Spirit, you will find that repose which you have so long unsuccessfully sought in an ensnaring world. The Saviour's commandments you will discover to be not grievous, his service to be perfect freedom. The close of life, which, to so many, reveals only the illusions they have followed, shall to you furnish matter for adoring and grateful retrospection. Death itself will be stripped of its sting. It shall prove the portal through which you shall enter upon joys infinite in degree, and everlasting in duration; while through eternity you shall bless that Divine grace which first led you to abandon for ever the vain pursuit of THE MIRAGE OF LIFE.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth,
Come ye to the waters,
And he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat;
Yea, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread;

And your labour for that which satisfieth not?
Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,
And let your soul delight itself in fatness.
Incline your ear and come unto me:
Hear, and your soul shall live."—*Isaiah* lv. 1–3.

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